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THE

DOCTRINE

OF

ATONEMENT.

BY THE LATE REV. HENRY TURNER,

OF NOTTINGHAM, ENGLAND.

PRINTED FOR THE

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The following tract presents the substance of two discourses published since the death of their lamented author. In throwing them into one, it has been found necessary to omit a few passages, and to transpose another. In other respects no alteration has been made.

THE DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT

The subject of the present publication, is the doctrine of the atonement, according to the usual acceptation of that term, to signify satisfaction made to God for the sins of men, by the sufferings and death of Christ.

We shall be very anxious, in what we offer on this subject, to avoid everything like misrepresentation; we shall therefore refrain from employing the language of its advocates, when it may be supposed that they have spoken unadvisedly, and have not intended that we should understand in a strict and literal sense the expressions which they have used. In return, we hope that our readers will rather judge by what will be now laid before them, than by the hasty and unfounded accusations which are so frequently brought against us by those, who have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

Observe, then, that Unitarians gratefully acknowledge, that the forgiveness of sins unto eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ; and through him

alone. They glory in the cross of Christ; they receive Christ as him who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; nay, they believe in an atonement by Christ, *in the only sense in which that word is used in Scripture.* It is not the atonement of the world by Jesus Christ that we are used to controvert; *but we deny that that atonement was effected by satisfaction.* There is no such word as *satisfaction* used in the whole New Testament; and the word *atonement* is only to be met with in one place, in the New Testament, Rom. v. 11. "We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have also received the atonement." And in this place, if you consult the margin of the larger bibles, you will there find the word *reconciliation* substituted for it. "By whom also we have received reconciliation." And the best expositors understand the passage in this sense.

But, observe, the word *atonement*, when properly understood, has the same meaning as *reconciliation.* It is made up of two English words, *at* and *one*, with the termination *ment;* now, *to be* AT ONE, is the same thing as to be in concord, to be united, reconciled; and *at-one-ment*, signifies the state or act of being reconciled or united; and is the same as reconcilement or reconciliation. So that in any passage where the word *reconcile* is used, we might, not improperly, adopt the word *atone*, as conveying the same meaning. For example, we might translate the passage in 2 Cor. v. 18, 19, thus; "All things are of God, who hath atoned us to himself, by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of atonement, to wit, that God was in Christ, atoning the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses

unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of atonement : we pray you in Christ's stead be ye atoned to God." But then, this would not be any proof of the popular doctrine of atonement, for in this passage it is God who offers atonement to men ; and we are described as receiving the atonement ; — expressions that are altogether improper, according to the ordinary view of the doctrine, since the atonement is ordinarily considered as made to God, received by God, and offered on the part of men. In short, there is no word corresponding either to satisfaction or atonement in that theological sense, in the whole New Testament. Now I think we ought always to be suspicious of a doctrine which cannot be expressed in scripture language.

The arguments brought forward to prove the doctrine of the satisfaction of Christ, are of two kinds, 1st, Reasonings drawn from the proceedings of men in cases that are thought to be similar ; and 2nd, Inferences from Scripture.

I. Let us, first, *examine the grounds on which is argued the reasonableness of this doctrine.*

I believe that no one in this day will attempt to establish the necessity of a satisfaction for the sins of men, upon the ground of the mere wrath and anger of God, as an offended party, so as that he could not be appeased till he had wreaked his vengeance on some one who stood in the place of, and suffered the punishment due to the offender. These are sentiments most unfit to be attributed to the Almighty ; especially as he cannot possibly receive injury at the hand of any. "If thou sinnest, [says Elihu to Job] what doest thou unto Him ; if thou be righteous, what givest thou then, or what receiveth He at thine hand ? Thy wickedness

may hurt a man as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit the son of man." Indeed, it is now, I suppose, universally acknowledged, that God, even the Father, is the spontaneous source and original fountain of salvation. "The sacrifice of Christ," says a celebrated modern advocate of what are called orthodox views, "was never deemed by any who did not wish to calumniate the doctrine of atonement, to have made God placable, but merely received as the means appointed by divine wisdom through which to bestow forgiveness." Hence, it appears that all those representations of the plan of our redemption which attribute a principle of wrath and vengeance to the Almighty, until changed unto love by the satisfaction and merits of Christ, are, by the confession of all parties, unfounded in truth and reason.

It is also, I believe, universally admitted, that we cannot place the necessity for a satisfaction for the sins of men, upon the ground of the mere sovereignty of God, and his unquestionable right to do what he will with his creatures. In requiring punishment, he does not act the part of an arbitrary sovereign, who makes his will the law, and who forbids us to seek for a reason of his proceedings. God is a perfectly good being, and therefore cannot possibly take pleasure in the mere sufferings of his creatures. Reason shows the truth of what Scripture declares, that God "hath no pleasure at all in the death of him that dieth." Punishment is in itself displeasing to him.

In what quality, then, must we consider God as acting, when he decrees the punishment of offenders? — Certainly in the quality of a good and wise Governor, consulting for the public benefit, and intending the

maintenance of good order, and the vindication of the laws which have been placed to promote the welfare of those who are subject to them.

So far intelligent persons of every party, I believe, are all agreed. But now arises this question, Can such a governor as we have described abate, or in any instance dispense with, the penalties which by law attach to his offending subjects? It is said he cannot. — That, which is the most kingly and beseeming attribute that belongs to earthly sovereigns, is withheld from the King of kings. He may not, it is said, in any instance exercise his merciful compassion, until the law (of which he is the sole enactor) is by some equivalent punishment satisfied, and its penal claims discharged.

Now, first, as to the reasonableness or justice of the expedient here supposed to be resorted to, in order to enable God, as the moral governor of the universe, to forgive offenders, can it be proved just, can it even be proved possible, to transfer guilt from one to another, so that the guilty shall escape, and the innocent be punished? Guilt is, in the nature of things, incapable of being transferred; and no principle of justice can demand, can even permit, that the innocent should be substituted for the guilty, as incurring the penalty of the law. Who ever heard of such a principle as a feature of human legislation? Even the tyrant Dionysius, when Damon generously urged him to put him to death in the room of his friend Pythias, started back from such a proposal, and forgave them both.

There are cases, no doubt, in which the innocent suffer in consequence of the crimes of the guilty; as when children are impoverished or disregarded, on account of the sins of their parents. However, we

ought to distinguish between sufferings and punishment. Who denies that an innocent person may suffer? But can it with propriety be said that he is punished? He has no consciousness of guilt; he partakes of the consolations which flow from religion, and bears his sufferings with patience and pious resignation; not like a criminal, overwhelmed with self reproaches, and agitated with bad and tormenting passions. Besides, there is here no substitution of the sufferings of the innocent for the punishment of the guilty. Bad parents, while they live, suffer for their crimes in their own persons, and are tormented by reflecting on the evils which they have brought upon their children; and their crime, and consequent future punishment, must be aggravated, not remitted, by what their children suffer.

Another example is sometimes produced, in which it is thought that there is some resemblance to the satisfaction supposed to be made by Christ for the sins of men. It is when a person, who has become surety, under a pecuniary bond, for the good behavior of another, is made to forfeit the bond in consequence of that person's misconduct. But surely this is not to the purpose. The forfeiture of the bond is the just penalty of his own rashness, in pledging himself for the behavior of an ill-disposed person, to the detriment of the public; and the forfeiture of the security does not release the offender himself, if he can be found, from the penalties which the law has affixed to his offence.

But supposing we were to grant it possible, and if possible then just, to impute guilt to, and inflict punishment on, one, as the means by which another might escape the punishment due to his crimes, can it be shown

that, in the case of the offences of men against the laws of God, it was necessary to resort to such a measure, in order that he may be enabled to release them from the penalties denounced against them? Is the Almighty debarred from a power which all law-givers exercise, of relaxing, when it is thought fit, the condition by which he binds to the observance of his laws? This cannot be maintained; for it must be admitted that the very thing supposed, viz. to accept of the punishment of a person substituted for the offender, is actually to alter the conditions originally appointed as sanctions of the law. In every community that ever existed under the dominion of law, there has always resided somewhere a power of abating and altering the penalties directed against particular offences. And who will take upon him to assert, even of an earthly sovereign, that it enhances the dignity of his person, or adds glory to his crown, to be set forth as an inexorable and unrelenting judge? Can it then be becoming to deny that the Almighty Ruler of all things is able to exercise his clemency? a clemency, which must far exceed everything of the kind that resides in the breasts of earthly potentates. It certainly, then, cannot be maintained, that, when the Almighty desired to forgive his offending creatures, there existed some necessity, that compelled him to exact the strict payment of penalties which he was otherwise disposed to remit; and that there was no way but that of requiring full satisfaction, through the sufferings and death of Christ, by which he could justly be merciful. — Indeed, it is acknowledged by several ancient Authors in the Christian church, particularly by Athanasius and Au-

gustine, that God might have saved us by his own will, without the intervention of Jesus Christ ; and Bernard asks, "Who knows but that the Almighty had the choice of various methods of our redemption, justification, and deliverance ?" From which it is evident that, in the opinion of these ancient fathers, the satisfaction made by Christ for the sins of men, was not essential to the forgiveness of sins.

It follows, from all these considerations, that the law of God is not of that irrevocable, implacable description which it is sometimes represented to be ; but that it may naturally be expected to admit of some relaxation, and not necessarily to require full satisfaction.

I will not however deny, that for the maintenance of good order in the moral universe, it is necessary that limits and conditions should be affixed to the exercise of the divine clemency, in the forgiveness of sins ; otherwise those laws which are designed for the welfare of his creatures will be neglected and disobeyed. But let us duly consider whether, if it be for no other object than to secure the reverence and obedience of mankind to these righteous laws, other limits and conditions may not be found, that will have at least as good a tendency this way. What if the necessary condition of forgiveness be a hearty repentance, and a strict amendment of life, will this have no tendency to enhance our veneration for that law which is declared to be the rock of our life and the necessary condition of our salvation ? Shall we say, That until a satisfaction for sin is provided, he that is sorry for his sins, is as much to be despaired of, as he that continues in them ? If "there be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth," does it not follow, that the holiest and most en-

lightened part of God's moral creation perceives no obstacle but impenitence in the way of the full exercise of mercy towards offenders? If it be otherwise, what explanation shall we find of many ample declarations which the Almighty has made in his holy word, of his will and power to save the penitent sinner? One remarkable passage, taken from the 18th chapter of Ezekiel, will suffice to impress the force of this argument. "If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him. In his righteousness that he hath done, he shall live. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked shall die, saith the Lord God, and not that he should return from his ways and live? When the wicked turneth away from his wickedness, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Because he considereth and turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die."—Now what exception can we possibly take to this passage of holy writ? Shall we dare to aver that the demands of justice are not satisfied by a course of proceeding which God has expressly declared to be his own; or does it not approve itself to reason, as calculated in every view to secure our reverence to laws established on such equitable and unimpeachable principles of wisdom and goodness?

II. Having thus examined the arguments which have been drawn from the nature of things, and from what we know of the natural principles of justice and equity,

to prove the doctrine of satisfaction, by the sufferings and death of Christ, and given many reasons why they do not appear solid or conclusive ; we shall now proceed to advert *to some of the arguments drawn from scripture*.

The doctrine of atonement for the sins of men, by satisfaction received from the sufferings and death of Christ, is argued from the comparisons made by the writers of the New Testament, between the death of Christ, and the sacrifices, and other ceremonies, under the Jewish law. In this argument it is assumed, that the sacrifices and offerings under the Jewish law proceeded upon the notion of satisfaction for sin, by vicarious punishment ; which cannot, I think, be proved. Victims were slain upon the altar of the Lord, not only as sin-offerings, but as peace-offerings and as burnt-offerings.

Now, peace-offerings were intended to express the thanks of the offerer for the mercies of Providence, and were the acts of grateful homage ; and therefore there could be no idea of punishment included in the sacrifice of a victim in such instances. Burnt-offerings, also, had no reference to sin, but were offered to God as to the Creator, Lord, and Preserver of all, who is worthy of all worship and honor. From this it is most evident, that under the Jewish law, the death of a victim in sacrifice does not of itself express the idea of punishment for sin. Sacrifices and offerings to God taken from the fruits of the earth, or from the animals which lived upon its surface, seem to have formed the earliest kind of worship which mankind paid to their Creator. They were not, then, capable of a more refined kind of worship, and the idea of offering gifts to God was suit-

able to their rude notions of gratitude and piety. This became a part of the religion of the Jews, not from any intrinsic worth or propriety that there was in such a mode of worship, but because it suited best the untutored mind of men under this temporary and imperfect institution. The holy men who lived and wrote under the Jewish dispensation, are at great pains to confute the supposition that there was any intrinsic worth in such offerings, and, indeed, studiously enlarge upon the inefficacy and unimportance of the rite of sacrifice. To show this, I need only produce one or two passages from the Old Testament. "Thou desirest not sacrifice," said David (li. Psalm. 16, 17) "else would I give it, thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart thou wilt not refuse." "To what purpose," saith Jehovah by his prophet (Isaiah i. 2) "are a multitude of your sacrifices unto me? I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fruits of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats." And also that splendid passage in the book of Micah, (vi. 6, 8) "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the Most High? — Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? He hath shown thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Thus the writers of the Jewish church absolutely disown the notion of being able in any way to present God with an equivalent or compensation to induce him to pardon; and it is plain they had no idea that their sacrifices under the law were a type or symbol of any

equivalent or satisfaction which should subsequently be given for the sins of men. For if they had viewed their sacrifices in this important light, they certainly could not have spoken of them as, under any view, trifling or insignificant.

There certainly is a great number of passages in the New Testament, in which the death of Christ is compared to that of a victim in sacrifice ; and he is also, in several places, said to have redeemed us with his blood, to have borne our sins, to have given himself without spot to God, that he might purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Expressions of this kind, brought together from different parts of the New Testament, present an appearance of confirming very strongly the doctrine of the real sacrifice of Christ ; and when they are adduced, are usually appealed to with great confidence, as admitting of no other meaning, without the adoption of a violent and unnatural method of interpretation. But there is an obvious reason for suspecting that no such interpretation of these passages can appear *natural*, since they evidently refer to rites and customs with which we are by no means familiar ; and being originally written by persons brought up in the Jewish religion, for the use of those who were perfectly acquainted with its forms and ceremonies, might very naturally be employed to express ideas which will be almost certain to appear to us fanciful and *unnatural*. We are not to expect that we should be able to understand scripture, without taking such circumstances into consideration. Happily, indeed, the New Testament was written by plain men, whose humble rank and want of learning, preserved them from the obscurity which arises from the affectation of science, and qualified

them for writing works which were intended for the use of all mankind. But that they should be perfectly free from modes of expression peculiar to their own country and religion, and derived from the circumstances of their own times, was not to be expected, and if practicable, would probably have been productive of no real benefit; since it would have deprived their works of those features, which furnish a powerful argument for their genuineness.

We should soon find ourselves involved in the most palpable errors, if we always adopted that which appeared the most obvious and natural interpretation of every passage. The most natural interpretation of the words of Christ respecting the Lord's Supper, "This is my body," is that which the Roman Catholics give to them; but we are not for that reason bound to subscribe to the absurd doctrine of transubstantiation. We must make use of common sense, and consider the general purport and strain of Scripture, or we shall make both heresy and nonsense of various parts of it. It is an obvious rule in perusing any work, to interpret that which is obscure, consistently with that which is plain; and where language is used which is evidently figurative, which is borrowed from some other subject, and is applied by way of illustration or ornament, to allow a greater latitude of interpretation, than when the terms are simple, and strictly appropriate to the subject in hand.

The general question, then, to be determined, with respect to passages of this nature occurring so frequently in the New Testament, is this; Can a method be discovered of accounting for the application to Christ of such expressions as are borrowed from the ceremo-

nies of the Jewish law, without supposing that any exact and close correspondence was originally intended; and such a method as shall leave unimpeached the credit and authority of the Christian Scriptures as the divinely appointed rule and standard of our faith? We think that such a method may be discovered, and ought to be applied, unless we be resolved to charge upon scripture the obscurity and uncertainty which are the result of our previous prejudices.

Suppose the case of men born Jews, and brought up in the pious profession of the Jewish religion, attending with devout assiduity upon the temple worship, and "in all the ordinances of the law blameless." Suppose them to have arrived at a mature age, with their religious habits, sentiments and expressions, modelled after the form of a ritual and ceremonial dispensation; and at that period let them be introduced to the knowledge of a more spiritual, purer system of religious faith and practice, and let them become inspired apostles and writers under this new dispensation; let them have occasion to write epistles to separate communities of believers, composed in a considerable degree of men brought up, like themselves, in an attachment to the ancient institutions of Moses. What will naturally be the style of their religious writings? Certainly it will be Jewish; and where religious expressions already in frequent and devout use appear applicable to new topics, they will be used in preference to others, of which no definitions are at hand, or which must be made on purpose. This would naturally be their style of writing. And there would be a great advantage in its being so. For the more familiar the language, the better it is understood; and an abstract method of expressing religi-

ous truths would be an uninteresting jargon, quite foreign to all practical use or benefit.

Again, let us consider what impressions might naturally be felt by those writers, and by those to whom they wrote? Something of this sort; — that, though the understanding fully admitted the superior excellence of the Christian system, yet there was a void in their feelings, a loss of some of the pleasures and tastes of a religious kind to which they had been accustomed, and a frequent tendency towards apathy and indifference on the subject of religion. As this exposed converts to the temptation of going back to Judaism, and was a stumbling block for those who remained in unbelief, it was highly important to provide against it. And it was natural to take the method of providing against it, which is employad in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Christian Hebrews had been reproached by their unbelieving brethren with the want of an altar, a priest, a sacrifice. In answer to this, the writer shows that there was a sense in which they wanted none of these.

Let us now suppose, farther, that the author and principal person in this new spiritual kingdom, after leading a blameless and holy life, in continual obedience to God, and pursuit of the best interests of man, was persecuted on account of his goodness, and the sublime objects he had in view, and indeed voluntarily submitted himself to the effects of their rage, and suffered death upon the cross; after which, being raised far above principalities and powers, and being no longer subject to their control, he had power given him from on high to send forth his apostles upon the ministry of reconciliation unto all nations; delivering from the power of death, by the evidence of his resurrection,

and from the power of sin, by the proclamation of forgiveness for sins past, and a future righteous judgment. Can it be said to be unnatural or absurd for persons trained up in the ancient religion, to describe so wonderful, so glorious a series of events, by all the images that had formerly been devoted to express their most sacred, exalted, and delightful conceptions? Can we wonder, that Christ should be termed a sacrifice, a priest, an altar, a mercy-seat; that he should be compared to the priest entering into the holy of holies; and that his ascending to heaven should be described as an entering within the veil, offering up himself as a sacrifice once for all, now to appear in the presence of God for us; putting away sin by his sacrifice of himself?

Thus we see that, both by habit and design, it was natural for the apostles of Jesus Christ to express themselves, on this animating and delightful subject, with a considerable latitude of language. Nor can we see any objection to their being allowed to follow the natural bent of their feelings in this respect. It conciliated, without misleading, the Jews, who were accustomed to such allusions; and it would neither mislead nor revolt those of the present day, if they duly reflected upon the necessary influence of previous circumstances on the minds of the apostles.

Having proposed this general key for the interpretation of the passages in which the death of Christ is compared to the sacrifices under the law, it is proper that I should now examine some of them more particularly; that it may appear how far it is capable of application. I shall confine myself to a very few instances.

Romans, iii. 24, 25. "Being justified freely," says the apostle, "by his (that is God's) grace through the

redemption that is in Christ Jesus ; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, (or rather, as all modern commentators agree to translate it, a propitiatory, that is, a mercy-seat) through faith in his blood ; to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forgiveness of God." The apostle here represents Christ as a mercy-seat, consecrated by his own blood, on which the goodness of God, as it were, takes its stand, and declares his gracious purposes and dispositions towards mankind. What was the mercy-seat amongst the Jews ? Here it was that God made the glorious declaration of pardon and favor to penitent sinners. " There," says the Lord, " I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat." (Exod. xxv. 22.) With what propriety and force might this title be applied to Christ ! He, indeed, became the seat of mercy. By his means did the Lord God commune again with his people. He was the medium of the mercy of God, in proclaiming to the world a clearer revelation of his will.

Christ is also said to have been "made a curse for us." Here it may be fairly asked, whether by his being made a curse is meant, in the eye of the Jews, or in the eye of God his Father? It is allowed that the Jews denounced him an accursed person. But if by *accursed* we mean living under the displeasure of God, this was so far from being the case with respect to Christ in his death, that in this very circumstance he was the object of the divine complacency in the highest degree ; as he himself says, " for this reason does my Father *love* me, because I lay down my life ;" and it is a general observation in the scriptures, that " precious in the sight of God is the death of his saints." But the verse speaks

for itself, if the whole be read, and the apostle appears anxious to explain what he means. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, accursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Now Christ was hanged on a tree, and therefore, in this legal sense of the word, he was accursed.

After stating these instances, let us repeat, it must be clear that these expressions are not all to be taken literally; for if they are, they absolutely contradict each other. For instance, a *curse* and an *acceptable sacrifice*, are totally inconsistent. For to render a sacrifice acceptable, it was requisite that it should be pure: "Thou shalt not sacrifice unto the Lord thy God any thing wherein is blemish, or that is an abomination unto the Lord thy God." Either, therefore, Jesus was not a curse, or he was not a sacrifice, in the sense of the believers in the commonly received doctrine of the atonement. Again, Christ was a priest, a victim, and a mercy seat: how are these things to be reconciled if all are to be taken literally?

In 1 Cor. v. 7, Christ is compared to the Passover or Paschal-lamb — "Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us." Here it is plain that Christ is described under the figure of the Paschal-lamb, just as the Christians are exhorted to be pure under the figure of unleavened bread. But consider also the nature of the sacrifice to which Christ is here compared. Was the Paschal-lamb a sin-offering? Certainly not. The death of the first-born of Egypt was the punishment of a crime in which the Israelites were so far from participating, that they were, in the nature of things, incapable of being guilty of it; and the feast of the Passover was meant

as a joyful token of their deliverance from the bondage of the Egyptians ; and was therefore the farthest possible from a satisfaction by vicarious punishment.

In the 10th chapter of Hebrews, 12th verse, the writer, speaking of Jesus Christ, says, "this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God." In this and a number of other passages, Jesus Christ is compared to a sin-offering under the Jewish law. Nor do we deny that Jesus Christ might most properly be considered as a sacrifice for sin, because his death and resurrection were necessary to the confirmation of that gospel by which sinners are brought to repentance, and the hope of eternal life ; and therefore reconciled to God. It will be said, that this is not a *literal* and *real* sacrifice. But can it be proved that the writers of the New Testament intended to represent Christ as a sacrifice in the most *literal* sense ? That they did not seems capable of an easy proof, from the following consideration. They have applied the same language to a variety of other subjects ; which they certainly would not have done, if they had conceived that Christ was a real sacrifice, and his death the great original of this religious rite. Thus St Paul exhorts Christians to "present their bodies a living sacrifice." St Peter describes them as a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, "to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." We are exhorted in the epistle to the Hebrews, "to offer up the sacrifice of praise to God continually." To do good and to communicate, forget not, "for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." "If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice in you all." And in Romans xv. he speaks of himself as the minister

of Jesus Christ to the guilty, ministering the gospel of God, "that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit." Thus we see that the writers of the New Testament were in the habit of applying this language to a great variety of subjects; which makes it less probable that when they applied it to the death of Jesus Christ they meant that we should understand them literally.

Besides, though it is under this image of a sacrifice that they frequently speak of the death of Christ, it is by no means the only representation which they give of it. He is described as a good shepherd laying down his life for his sheep. He speaks of himself as a grain of corn, which, unless it fall into the ground and die, abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit. He is spoken of as a captain leading his followers to salvation. By a variety of figures, he is described as a priest, an altar, a mercy-seat, a high-priest entering within the veil, a sacrifice. Here it appears, that whatever comparisons are made between the death of Christ and the sacrifices, and other ceremonies of the law, they are all capable of being explained in the same way, as expressions having great beauty and propriety when considered as figurative, but destitute of both, if we attempt to explain them by a literal mode of interpretation.

Those passages which represent Jesus Christ as having *ransomed* and *redeemed* us, are to be explained in a similar manner, by reference to the general style of sacred Scripture. It is common in Scripture to describe the world as in a state of bondage and captivity, held under the strict dominion and oppression of enemies. Now, it was a custom with most nations to hold

their captives in a state of abject slavery, unless a sum was paid for their restoration to freedom. Mankind were slaves to the grossest superstitions ; the slaves o. sin, under the bondage of sin. From this slavery when they became Christians they were delivered, they were ransomed. When they are described as bought or purchased, this is an expression used in many cases, where, in a literal sense, no price was paid for the deliverance. Thus Exodus xv. 16, "Fear and dread shall fall upon them, till thy people pass over, O Lord, till thy people pass over which thou hast purchased." Deut. xxxii. 16, "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise ? Is he not thy father that hath bought thee ? Hath he not made thee and established thee ?" God buys a people when he interposes in their favor. And thus Christ purchased us by his death, not from God, but from sin and the power of death ; for he delivered us from the evil course of this world, and gave us motives for holiness and obedience, arising from faith in God to forgive sin unto eternal life. So, with respect to the word *redeemed*, we are described as redeemed from all iniquity ; and we are exhorted to redeem time, in which no literal notion of purchase can be admitted.

To produce all the passages which relate to this subject, and to afford distinct explanations of them, would greatly exceed the limits of this Tract. What has been said already, may perhaps be sufficient to enable us to understand the principles on which they may be explained consistently with the general sense of Scripture ; and so as not to contradict our established belief in the wisdom, goodness and mercifulness of God. And shall we despise the riches and long suffering of God, as displayed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, because the

means which he has adopted do not exactly accord with our expectations? Shall we find fault with them as not sufficiently splendid and dignified? The simplicity of the means employed is surely one of the greatest proofs of the divine origin of the Christian institution. When we consider what important things are revealed to us, what more can we desire? We are told of the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the dead, and the life everlasting; of the providence of God ever exercised over us and in our behalf; the ascension and immortality of Christ, the perpetual love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Why should we wish for knowledge on more important subjects? What is there incomplete for direction and instruction in righteousness? What is there that could have a more happy tendency to inspire us with the most fervent love and veneration of God, and to fill us with sentiments of the most sincere gratitude towards Jesus Christ? We look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, having overcome death, is become the author of eternal salvation to all them that believe in him. He that was dead is alive, he is present to intercede for the welfare of his church, and he will come again to receive his faithful followers to himself. May we earnestly strive to prepare ourselves for his glorious appearance, that we may not be ashamed before him, at his coming, but may be received unto glory, and honor, and praise, through the mercy of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

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CLAIMS

OF

THE GOSPEL

ON

UNITARIAN CHRISTIANS.

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CLAIMS OF THE GOSPEL

ON

UNITARIAN CHRISTIANS.

We are to consider what claims the gospel makes to our exertions for the benefit of our fellow-creatures. And when we speak of the gospel, we understand it to consist both of doctrines to be believed and duties to be done. A distinguishing feature of the Christian religion is to be found in the extension of its benevolent regards from the few to the many. Heathen philosophers may have limited their influence to the academy or the porch, but Christ broke down all barriers; he spoke to the people; he went about doing good and preaching the word; he appealed to the fact of the poor having the gospel preached to them, as a satisfactory proof of his being sent of God. There never was a system which was so general in its regards, which bore so invasive a character, as Christianity in its earliest days. What is the commission which Christ gave to the twelve, to the seventy, to his disciples at large prior to his ascension, but a commission to go

and preach the gospel to their neighborhoods, to every creature? And how was this command obeyed? What city or shore was there which the feet of the apostles did not tread, to make known the unsearchable riches of Christ? Unlike their degenerate successors, they did not wait till men inquired; they did not station themselves in one spot, and leave all beyond their little circle in ignorance and sin; they did not lie inertly down, and look for the workings of Providence, and the gradual diffusion of their cherished principles. No; they went forth into near and distant lands, disregarding perils, persecution, and death, to bear their testimony to the truth of the gospel, and to overthrow the strong holds of heathen abominations. They were missionaries. Like Jesus, they breathed the missionary spirit and did the missionary's work. Every preacher was a missionary, going about doing good, sent, and glorying in his office, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. We are sure, therefore, that the spirit of missions is the spirit of Christ and of Christianity. We are sure that, till the kingdom of heaven is come in every heart, it is the duty of every Christian to be a missionary, to go and carry the gospel to his neighbor, to go as far as circumstances permit preaching peace by Jesus Christ. That Christian is, to say the least, deficient in an essential element of the Christian character, who is not a missionary; and pre-eminently that minister serves badly his Master's cause who is hostile to the cause of missions. We are not now speaking of exertions in foreign lands. Home missions are abundantly wanted in every part of our country — men who, feeling the value of truth and the power of godliness, should be

instant in season and out of season, instructing the young, warning the prodigal, visiting the orphan and the widow, stimulating inquiry, awakening attention to the claims of truth, going to the homes of the poor and with tenderheartedness and sincerity telling them of the great salvation, and inviting them to accept the gracious offers of their Father.

Another leading feature of Christianity is seen in the earnest concern which it manifests for the immortal welfare of man. This concern is manifest in every page of the New Testament. How strongly, how fervently, did it burn in the soul of Jesus! Thus on one occasion he expressed his emotions: 'O that thou hadst known, even now, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! But now they are hid from thy eyes.' The great object, in fact, of his mission was to seek and to save that which was lost; the great inducement which led him to all his privations and sufferings, was the tender interest which he felt for the welfare of man. For us he lived, for us he suffered, for us he died. He became the Saviour of the world, because he pitied its lost condition. He died that we might live, because he knew that it profiteth a man nothing, though he gain the whole world and lose his own soul. Should we not strive to feel as he felt — to have the same concern, the same pity, the same estimate of the worth of the soul, as he had, and to make at least some efforts to save it from sin and suffering? Let us put a case fairly before us of a human being left to the misery of a wicked heart, rising up to corrupt a whole family — his own offspring. Let us think how all the emotions of the inmates of that

family, which in their natural condition would have been each replete with happiness, are perverted and made the sources of constant trouble and torment; how that their home, which ought to be the nursery of virtue and the resting-place of affection, is converted into a scene of strife, agitation, and sin; how husband rises up against wife, and child against parent, and a man's worst foes are those of his own house; and then, following up the consequences of this pitiable state, reflect on the wrath, tribulation, and anguish, which assuredly await each of these unhappy creatures —viewing the constant succession of sin and suffering through each period of their existence; and how can we, if there breathes aught of the spirit of Christ in our heart, if mere humanity e'er touched our breast, hesitate a moment that it is our duty to exert a remedial influence, or fail to experience inexpressible delight in rescuing a fellow-creature, a father, a family, from present and from future misery? No; he that follows Christ will pity sinners, and labor for their reformation. He will not be content to do justly, but he will love mercy also; he will not be content to wait for, he will seek, occasions of leading men to God. Freely of the gospel he has received; freely he will give.

The true Christian has a constant sympathy with the spirit of the gospel. The objects which it pursues are his objects; his desires, his affections, his aversions, are the same as those of his Lord. He is one with Christ and one with God by a unity of will and of effort. To save sinners is represented in word and in deed as the great work of God, of Christ, and of apostles. The highest and the most holy energies are engaged in the

enterprise — engaged with an earnestness and a tenderness, with an ardor of devotement and a constancy of endeavor, that are truly sublime. What condescension in the Deity, what benignity in his Son, what sacrifices in his messengers, do we there read of! Religion as beheld in the New Testament is no light thing—'it is your life.' However low may be our estimate of the value of the soul, the whole world is no measure of it in the judgment of our Lord. 'For what is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' Nor less is its value in the sight of the Creator. To form the human soul, to make it a free, active agent, choosing and pursuing good, desirous and capable of everlasting happiness — to form and save the soul, he made the world, the retinue of the heavens, the furniture of the earth, the frame of the body; he appointed the relations and discipline of life, he sent his well beloved Son, and yielded him up even unto death. All things, says the apostle to his converts — all things are yours; because all things, the whole furniture and discipline of the school in which man is placed, works together for our good, and contributes to build up the noblest work of God, the soul of man. Must not that, then, be inexpressibly valuable which God himself so estimates as to create the world for its nursery, and the infinitude of objects therein for its instructors? What, therefore, ought to be our estimate of the soul's value? What God hath cleansed, shall we call that common or unclean? What he hath esteemed, shall we disesteem? What he created the world and gave his Son to form and bless, shall we neglect? Let us not so far lose the spirit of the Gospel. All other things

are as the light dust of the balance in comparison of the human soul. Let us then remember that the true Christian has a constant sympathy with the spirit of the gospel.

Whatever may have been the doctrine of heathen philosophers, whatever may now be the doctrine of the world on this subject, beneficence with the Christian is not optional, but obligatory. To do good is with him a law equally binding as to be good. Christ has in his code changed that which was aforetime voluntary, into a matter of obligation. He requires each of his followers, in imitation of himself, to advance the interests of his fellow-men, and he represents the awards of the final judgment as taking place according as each man had used or neglected the talent entrusted to him. Among the considerations by which the duty of beneficence is enforced on Christians, that is among the most interesting and constraining which is derived from considering the mercy and grace which each has received of God through Christ. If we have received mercy, we ought to show mercy; if we are in the way of salvation, we ought to lead others into the same paths. It is the least we can do for mercy and grace unmerited and often despised. In exercising our gifts we shall augment, not waste them. And this is a fact which merits peculiar notice. Our own piety is not extinguished by kindling another's. Like the widow's cruise of oil and barrel of meal, it wastes not, however used. On the contrary, it grows the more, the more it imparts. For so strong are the inducements to beneficence which the Creator has planted in our frame, that the more good we do, the more good and

the more happy we are. And amidst the pleasures of life, there is scarcely one that affords so delightful and lasting a satisfaction as that derived from a consciousness of having benefited a fellow-creature. But when the benefit conferred affects not merely his mortal, but his immortal part; when in time it will make him comfortable, in eternity happy; when it will affect him in his heart, in his home, in his public walks and character, in his influence, in his children; when unborn generations will share the good, and the frame of society be meliorated thereby; when the full amount of blessing which it has occasioned, the future state only can disclose, and eternity only can measure — then, surely, the consciousness of having saved but one soul is enough to impart joy unspeakable and full of glory. Yes, to work together with God is not a duty merely — it is a privilege, it is a delight — it is a delight which will grow for ever, as the happy effects of such labors of love unfold themselves in this and the future world. Unhappy men that know nothing of this pleasure; who live and die with their thoughts and affections concentred all in self; who have never at the close of a day reflected on its scenes in the pleasing hope that some prejudice might in a fellow-being's mind have been removed, some evil habit shaken, some grief assuaged, some hope confirmed, some joy inspired. And occasionally to enjoy the happy frame of mind which such thoughts occasion, is an overpayment of happiness for exertions made, and obstructions conquered, and exertions, as, alas! they too often are, unproductive.

There is still another feature of the gospel to which we shall allude. The gospel professes to be 'the

truth,' to be emphatically that system which is best calculated to bring about the great moral purposes of the Creator. Jesus himself is 'the life,' because he is 'the way' and 'the truth.' No warrant can be found in the New Testament for treating with indifference the progress of the whole or any part of the gospel. The religion of Jesus is there held forth as a treasure of inestimable value; yes, and, in a certain sense, of indispensable necessity to the salvation of men. It is not pretended that it teaches that those who believe not the gospel will eternally perish. But it does set forth, and reason warrants the declaration, that without it the soul may be lost — lost to goodness, lost to happiness; though not, we would hope, lost beyond the reach of God's mercy, yet lost in this and in the future state. And in unison with this, it is abundantly evident that on the reception of the gospel depends the perfection of human character. To be greatly good or greatly happy without it, seems impossible. No other system approaches to it in fitness to call out the powers of the human breast, and raise man to the height of excellence which he has the capacity of attaining. While in proportion as its hold on the heart becomes weak, so does the character fall and the happiness decrease. Now, its power over the soul may be weakened by corruptions attaching to itself, as well as by wickedness in man. Hence arises the necessity of bringing the gospel to bear upon the soul in the same state of purity as that in which it was revealed by Jesus, and promulgated by apostles. Except this be the case, it is not 'the truth,' it is not the gospel, but human devices, that seek the dominion of the heart.

But it may be asked, How am I to know that the gospel, as I hold it, is the gospel as revealed by Jesus? You believe that the principles you hold are the principles of Christianity, or you would not entertain them. They are the result of your inquiries; they command the assent of your mind. Here, then, is your warrant to diffuse them. And more, in your belief is involved an obligation. A constraint is laid upon you to teach others what has been imparted to you. 'Woe is me,' said the Apostle, 'if I preach not the gospel.' And even though you may not possess 'the truth' in the sentiments which you have adopted, yet the communication of it, leading to comparison with other principles, and to collision with other minds, may conduce to the discovery and extension of right apprehensions; whereas if every one had pleaded the difficulty you plead, there never could have been any discussion, and consequently truth would have remained unknown. And thus the human race, from the fear that they possessed not the truth, would for ever have deprived themselves of its blessings. On the contrary, the fearless yet candid advocacy of private opinions, has led to the furtherance of knowledge and the promotion of happiness; and perseverance in the fearless yet candid advocacy of *our* private opinions, is the only method by which 'the truth' can obtain its predicted prevalence, and the evils with which the world, in its present condition, is marred, can be effectually removed. It seems, then, that the voice of the gospel calls upon us to labor both for the furtherance of truth, and for the furtherance of righteousness. The two ought never to be disjoined; they are united in the gospel; they ought to be united

in our apprehensions, in our language, in our affections, in our endeavors. The distinction of speculative and practical principles may exist in common phraseology — it exists not in the Testament ; may serve to point a tirade against popular exertions, but cannot advance the real interests of man. The truth only can make man free ; the whole truth, and nothing but the truth ; and he can know or feel but little of his creed who does not value his principles as a Unitarian Christian above all price. What is the meaning of that disparagement of Unitarianism which one sometimes meets with even from men that ought to know and speak better ? Unitarianism is to them 'the truth ;' do they undervalue that ? It is the religion of Jesus; ought that to be lightly thought and lightly spoken of ? But they would reply, 'We value most highly his precepts and his example ; we do not like controversy.' And why not his doctrines too ? Is Christ divided ? Does the New Testament permit you to take what you please, and to leave what you please ? We repeat, Christ is 'the life,' because he is the truth ; and without the truth you cannot be, no man can be, thoroughly 'free.'

But of all errors, that appears to us among the greatest which represents Unitarianism as a system of speculations. It is no such thing. There is no tenet in it which is not intimately connected with practice, otherwise it could not be the gospel ; and for ourselves we venerate it chiefly because of its immediate bearing on the heart and life. The unity of God is essential to his paternity, and the paternity of the Creator is the creature's best solace and support, while it tends more

than any other sentiment to unite men together in the bonds of a common brotherhood. But we must not cite instances to prove the assertion that the doctrines of Unitarianism are intimately blended with piety and benevolence. Those who have realized the former, will show forth the latter, and know of a truth that it is a doctrine according to godliness. And we will add, that a full perception of the blessings conferred by Unitarian sentiments will prompt the desire to spread their influence. This full perception can, perhaps, be hardly felt except by those who have been redeemed from the galling thraldom of some of the denominations which prevail around us. But let a man have fully felt what Calvinism teaches to be true, and he will then know what is meant by 'the glorious liberty of the sons of God.' Sweet as the light and warmth of day to the long-incarcerated prisoner, sweet as health and vigor to him who has suffered days and months of sickness and vanity, sweet as peace and joy to the disconsolate and anxious breast, is the change from the gloomy and terrifying doctrines of genuine Calvinism, to the mild and affectionate and cheering accents of the Son of God. And even without this painful experience, some conception may be formed of the comparative value of truth and error, by attention to the doctrines of the day, as set forth in the pulpits of our orthodox brethren, and more especially of those who are truly Calvinistic. We are supplied with, though at present we have not room for, illustrations of this assertion. But we have often thought, when engaged either in hearing or reading the representations that prevail of the character of God and the destiny of man, that if

our Unitarian brethren who set their face against popular exertions were but to hear and read such things for themselves, their benevolence would prove too strong for their caution, and impel them to encourage and originate the means of enlightening the mind and consoling the heart of their fellow-christians. And, again, we have thought that the wonder is not that there are so many, but that there are so few unbelievers; for we frankly say, we see not how a man of common intelligence can believe what is delivered from many pulpits. And thousands might, we doubt not, have been rescued from the gloomy and uncomfortable regions of scepticism, had the unadulterated gospel of Christ been laid before them; and it is still in the power of Unitarians to save others from the same melancholy fate, if they will prove true to their obligations.

What stronger obligations can any one lie under than those we have now set forth? In addition to all the powerful claims of the gospel, we are called to feel the claims which lie upon reformers, and upon those who may, and who only effectually can, vindicate the truth of Jesus, and arrest the march of infidelity. We are not without examples, bright and noble examples, and prompters in our own communion. There have been men bearing our name who counted all things but dung and dross, that they might win and honor Christ. Have we not read of what a Biddle, an Emlyn, a Priestly, and a Lindsey, to say nothing of those who have emulated their example in America, did and suffered for the cause of truth? Faithful were they in their day, doing the duties thereof. To them it belonged to bring

forth the pearl of great price from beneath the rubbish by which it was hidden. Did they shrink from their duty ? Was it easy of performance ? What they discovered, we, in the order of Providence, are called upon to hold up to the world. Shall we prove unworthy successors of these excellent of the earth ? They were required to be in the study, we in the pulpit ; they in private, we in public ; they to search, we to promulgate. Here is our duty ; and except we perform it, every word of eulogy we give to their memories is a word bringing disgrace upon ourselves. There were giants in the earth in those days. But if we have not equal strength with them, we have an easier task. We have only to apply what they discovered. Theirs was the work of the intellect, ours of the heart. Pre-eminent talents were essential to them, we want chiefly a benevolent disposition. Let us not then with a lighter — yes, and a pleasanter task, and in happier times, fail to carry forward the work they commenced.

But it will be said the work is going on. A gradual change is taking place in the creeds of other Christians. Granted ; but this consideration affects not one jot our duties. We ought, therefore, to thank God and take courage. To spread a purer belief is not the only work we have to do. We have also to spread the spirit and power of the gospel ; we have to root out sin, and to plant instead piety and goodness. And until the agents that are employed are adequate to effect all of this nature that is required, not one who is called by the name of Christ is at liberty to refuse to labor in his Master's vineyard. Alas ! after all the exertions that have been made, there is but too

large a mass of iniquity entirely beyond the reach of all Christian influences. Crime increases with the increase of the population, and in every district of the country there are but too many who claim the sympathy and aid of every Christian.

But however much the opinions of our fellow-christians may be undergoing modification, we cannot, we confess, see how this is a reason for lukewarmness on our parts. If they have approached somewhat to the word of God, this would seem rather the offer of Providence to work together with us, an invitation to avail ourselves of a favorable opportunity. Or are we to conclude that because the spirit of the day, and the progression of events, are in our favor, that, therefore, we are exonerated from all exertion? On no other subject should we reason in this manner. It was 'in the fulness of time' that the Almighty made Christianity known. A favorable state of the world should not arrest, but prompt, efforts for the welfare of man. Besides, what is the cause of this modification? Before the day of Socinus and that of Priestly, centuries had passed away, and creeds went on continually growing more absurd and lengthy. But when they had kindled the light, it gradually spread its beams through the church, to some in less, to some in greater number. Without their labors, then, the work could not have been begun; how can it be terminated without ours? The notion we are combating goes to destroy the very means by which the change recorded has taken place. And well may we be assured, that except we hold up the light that has been kindled, transmitting the torch from hand to hand, and from age to age, augmenting

the volume of its light and the sphere of its influence, darkness will soon regain its former empire — each succeeding generation becoming more ignorant than the former.

But the respondent may answer, 'Truth is mighty and must prevail.' True; but not without human agency. 'Providence will take care of its interests.' Yes; but in its usual manner — by human co-operation. Strange as it may seem, we really fear that these notions prevail to a great extent. Yet even a Heathen fabulist saw and exposed their absurdity, teaching all such reasoners, that if any good is to be effected for the human race, human beings must put their shoulder to the wheel. Where would have been the Reformation if Wickliffe and Luther had contented themselves with relying on Providence? And in what condition would be the temporal concerns of our friends, the respondents, if they folded their arms and wrapped about them their cloaks and called on Providence? There is a good old saying most pertinent to the present topic, 'Providence helps those who help themselves.'

And now we must be permitted to turn the favorable aspect which is pleaded against, into an argument in favor of, increased exertion among the Unitarian body. That a change for the better has taken place we believe. The actual sentiments of our fellow-christians, though not their professed creeds, are less irrational than they were wont to be. The spirit of the times is in our favor. Men now dare to think, and in some instances to utter their sentiments. Inquiry is proceeding on every side. Reformation is gradually spreading around us. Let but the present activity of mind have its

full development, and the present systems of theology cannot endure. Creeds and confessions will crumble away before it. Who shall show a better way — who shall exhibit a purer faith — who shall set forth Jesus in his unsullied excellence? It is the duty, it ought to be considered the dearest privilege, of Unitarian Christians. And except they rally round the ark of God, it will, it is our belief, be carried away captive; the land will be visited with a season of darkness and coldness in the form of unbelief. Rather let us avail ourselves of this seasonable juncture. The fields are white to harvest, but the laborers are few. All things are ready; let us enter in and possess the land.

'But,' rejoin the cautious and the timid, 'is there not a fear of the body becoming zealous overmuch?' We humbly think not — that no fear can by any possibility be more unfounded. A review of the last thirty years will show that burning zeal is no essential element in our communion, and if we have been right in the views we have taken of the actual predominance of the intellect over the heart among Unitarian Christians at the present moment; if impediments and chills exist in anything like the degree which we have been led to suspect they do, the most zealous among us need not fear of his zeal overstepping the limits of moderation. We perhaps look upon zeal with rather different eyes than some others. When founded on principle, and constant in its action, and regulated by charity, it bears to us an aspect truly sublime, and the Saviour we love mainly for the righteous and fervent zeal he showed in his holy and beneficent undertaking. Of one thing, however, we may all rest assured, that

without zeal no cause can spread. Such is the uniform testimony of history. All the great moral changes which society has undergone have been effected by the ardor of zeal. What, indeed, is zeal but another word for enthusiasm? and to enthusiasm the world is more indebted than to any other principle of the human soul. The intellect may discover truth, but enthusiasm only can give it prevalence. This is peculiarly true of moral and religious truth. The Apostles succeeded in their benevolent efforts, and the Reformers in theirs, because they were enthusiastic in the cause to which they had devoted themselves. Nor do we think it possible for an impression to be made on the multitude, on a mass so dense and impervious to whatever wears the dress of novelty, without the aid of those lofty, commanding, and irresistible emotions, which are implied in enthusiasm. The rays of the sun, the drops of the rain, fall too gently to arrest their attention; the lightning and the thunderbolt are needful to arouse and penetrate them. And we are persuaded that if, instead of desultory efforts, we arose, as a body, to an attitude of defence and onset against sin and error, penetrated with the deep, earnest, yet tender spirit of the gospel; arose, not in scattered platoons, maintaining here and there a random and therefore ineffectual fire, but individually and collectively, we could not fail to command attention, to awaken admiration, to reform the heart, and to rectify the creed.

We again, therefore, utter the voice of invitation—Whosoever will, let him come. Hundreds there are, we believe, ready to respond to the call—hundreds who need only the encouragement which they ought to

receive. We call on those who have it in their power, to give the requisite countenance. We appreciate highly what ministers and laymen have already done. We are not made to disparage or forget (knowingly) any righteous effort for a cause which is in our minds identified with the cause of truth and the best interests of man. Yet it is but a few, comparatively, that have lent efficient aid, and they will be the first to acknowledge that their exertions have too often been disproportionate to their means and the goodness of the cause. Others we beseech by the love of Christ, and the mercies they have received, and by a regard to the welfare of their neighborhoods, and the happiness of immortal souls ; we beseech them to aid, counsel and direct, to stimulate and sustain, all those who manifest their love of God by their love for man, and their love for man by their love of the gospel, and their love of the gospel by well-sustained efforts for the increase of its prevalence. We beseech such to compare what they have done with what they might do, and from themselves to turn to our body at large, contrasting its actual efficiency with the efficiency of which it is capable.

It is with peculiar interest and concern that we advert to the younger part of our ministers, and to those who are preparing for the sacred duties of Christian pastors. They are the hope of the church. Their habits are not yet fixed ; the progress of time has not cooled down the warmth of their hearts ; the influence of a former age lies as yet lightly upon them ; in a word, they bring new minds and young affections into the church. Would to God that they may be enabled to devote all their energies to the great and honorable

work of leading men to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! May none of them be turned aside by the unconquerable force of circumstances to seek a livelihood and employment for their abilities in pursuits which, however honorable in themselves, have no immediate bearing on the duties of the ministry. We would have them to remember that the state of our churches, and the state of society, is such as to require, not geologists, not antiquarians, not mathematicians, not schoolmasters; but preachers and pastors, eloquent men and mighty in the Scriptures, men pervaded by one desire, that of reconciling man to God, and advancing the kingdom of Christ.

Turning from those who, by their station, are expected to be more influential than others, we call upon all individually who bear the name of Unitarian Christian. The work is yours; the duty is yours. You recognize no peculiar rights of the clergy. You do well; but, in consistency, lay not upon them any peculiar duties. You are each a minister of Christ. Every good man is or ought to be so. It is an honor to labor in your Master's vineyard. There is not one of you, however poor, but can labor, and with most desirable effect. Canst thou not, poor as thou art, adorn the doctrine thou hast professed, and, by the irresistible attraction of a holy conversation, put calumny to shame, and draw the teachable to the house of prayer? Canst thou not, by a punctual and regular attendance on the ordinances of public worship, encourage thy minister, increase the attendance, and thus cause the temple to wear a more winning and respectable aspect? Canst thou not in private visit the orphan and the widow

in their afflictions, cheer the disconsolate, discountenance vice, and plead with the sinner? Canst thou not inform the ignorant and instruct the young; or if, perchance, like Moses, thou art 'slow of speech,' canst thou not find many an eloquent spokesman who will ably plead the cause thou cherishest, though they speak not with the living tongue, but from the living page? Each one of you has a sphere of influence — we ask you to let the sounds of the gospel be heard therein. Each one has a talent — we ask of you to occupy it.

We call, then, upon the individuals of which our communion consists, to lend each his aid. Without the cooperation of the people at large little good can be done. In speaking of eminent men we often deceive ourselves; much as is due to them, we are wont to rate their individual influence too highly. We talk of the dominion of a single mind; but such a thing, in strictness of speech, is not to be found. Single and unaided, no man ever established an empire over his fellow-creatures. In reality, we forget the subordinate agents amidst our admiration of the chief — the inferiors that surround him are lost from sight in the blaze of his real or imagined glory. Yet, though forgotten, they are essential to success. Without fellow laborers, the skill and foresight of an architect, however pre-eminent they might be, would lead to no valuable result. In the same way, the wisest master builder that ever labored for the edification of the church of Christ, may, unless encouraged and aided by the operation of fellow-workers, spend his strength for nought, and labor in vain in the Lord. It was not by the surpassing and Herculean strength of an individual hand that those

stupendous edifices were raised which still strike the traveller with wonder and admiration as he follows the waters of the Nile, or ruminates amidst the ruins of Palmyra, or reflects on the ravages of time when surrounded by the splendid desolation of ancient Greece. No, the work was effected by ordinary mortals. One superior mind presided indeed, but all his great conceptions were carried into effect by the united efforts of men like unto ourselves. Far in the depths of the ocean there arise mountain-rocks which, from the bottom of an almost immeasurable sea, stretch upward to the surface of the waters. These are stupendous beds of coral, the work of tiny beings, which, age after age, attach themselves to the growing mass, and then perishing, accumulate, by insensible degrees, these mountains of the sea ; which at once bid proud defiance to the fury of the tempest, and present everlasting monuments of the efficacy of united operations. In the same manner, that building up in the heart of a holy temple to God, and in the world a pure and holy church, which is the great object of true religion, is to be effected, not by one but by many hands ; and as the building up of those stupendous rocks takes place by a series of the smallest depositions, so may every laborer, however little his means, give an efficient aid towards the edification of the church of Christ.

What a general, however eminent in talent and prowess, would prove to be without soldiers, that is a reformer without associates. Cæsar, we are wont to say, won the battle. And Cæsar may have laid the plans and guided the measures, and infused the spirit that mainly contributed to success ; but who bore the

tug of war, the labor and toil of the day ; who supplied the heart and sinews, that quailed not through fear, nor sunk even after the exhaustion of fatigue ? Not Cæsar, but his comrades. And so it is in the moral changes which have taken place. Wickliffe was succeeded by Huss, and Huss by Luther, and Luther fought the fearful battle, attended by a host of gallant companions; and to the present day the completion of their labors, in so far as it is effectually sought, is sought, not by scattered and insulated efforts, but by the binding together of the friends of human improvement, and the united action of many harmonious and concurring members. Even he who came forth to the great work under the special aid of the Almighty, sought in co-operation, and the co-operation even of fishermen, the means of success ; and his apostles, in their turn, never failed, wherever they established a church, to appoint some prophets, some evangelists, some teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifiying of the body of Christ, from whom the whole body, fitly compacted and connected together by the aid of *every* joint, and according to the *proportionate operation of every single limb*, thriveth to the improvement of itself in love.

Men and brethren, the path of duty is plain before you ; happy for yourselves, happy for the church, happy for the world, if ye walk therein.

1st Series. No. 76.

MR. BARNARD'S

FIRST REPORT

OF

HIS SERVICE,

AS A

MINISTER AT LARGE IN BOSTON.

PRINTED FOR THE

American Unitarian Association.

BOSTON:

CHARLES BOWEN, 141 WASHINGTON STREET.

October, 1833.

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REPORT.

To the Executive Committee of the

American Unitarian Association.

Gentlemen, — My connection with the Ministry to the Poor commenced under pleasing auspices in 1832.

While still at Cambridge, early in the spring of that year, I was requested to preach in the vacant pulpit of the Friend Street Chapel. I cheerfully complied ; and finding that the continuation of my services would relieve the gentlemen upon whom the supply of the desk had devolved, and promote at the same time the objects of the Chapel, I freely gave that also. The evening lecture was held each Sabbath, till the usual time of closing the house on account of the hot weather.

Meanwhile, I had called upon Dr Tuckerman, and offered him any assistance, that I could give, in the visiting to which his labors had for some time been confined. It was with great pleasure, on my part, that I was immediately permitted to visit with him among the people of his charge. Almost every forenoon of the remaining spring, and following summer, was passed in his company, as he ministered to the temporal and spiritual wants

of his scattered flock. I now witnessed, close at hand, the operations of a Mission which I had long admired, at a distance. I became familiar with human nature in many of its most interesting features, — its wants, — its exposures, — its temptations, — and its sin. I was called also to witness and admire instances of faithfulness and virtue, displayed amidst apparently the most adverse circumstances, and such as I had little conception of before. I began the study of Pauperism under an able instructer. And I learned, among the objects of his Ministry, both to value our holy Religion more highly, and to be more devoted to the advancement of its interests. I saw 'the will of God,' and 'the cause of Christ,' revealed in their infinite worth and truth by the wants they were to meet, the virtues they were to foster, and the sins they were to destroy ; and I became conscious of a wider apprehension and a deeper conviction of the obligations imposed upon me, as a child of God and a follower of Christ. Had my connection with the Ministry to the Poor extended no farther, I never should have ceased to reflect with gratitude upon the experience and knowledge I insensibly gathered in — a rich harvest from the months of that summer.

In August, the Secretary of your Board communicated my appointment to the Office of Assistant Minister at large. Dr Tuckerman and myself met with you to receive your views for the future conduct of this Ministry. Soon after, we divided the city between ourselves. The north-end, and the vicinity of the Chapel were assigned to me. Dr Tuckerman took the remainder. In October, 1832, our hands were strengthened by the offer of Mr F. T. Gray to take part with us. The plan which

originated with your Board had directed the appointment of two young men as assistants to Dr Tuckerman; and provision was thus unexpectedly and most happily made for its fulfilment. We immediately made a new division of the scene of our future labors. The City south of Summer and Winter Streets was given to me. Mr Gray took all north of Cambridge, Court, and State Streets, — with the prospect that the Friend Street Chapel should come under his charge, at the close of his preliminary studies, which were then in progress. Dr Tuckerman reserved the remainder to himself. The opening of the Chapel having been delayed a little in consequence of the prevalence of Asiatic Cholera in the country, our evening services were resumed on the 7th of October; and, from that time, continued through the winter. The audience was not large. It consisted chiefly of those who long had worshipped in that place, and was slowly on the increase, till about the usual time of omitting the services for the summer. The superintendent and teachers of the Howard Sunday School then came forward, and requested a morning and afternoon service, that the children under their charge might have a place of worship always provided for them. I was very happy to coincide with their views; and accordingly, having changed the time of service from the evening to both parts of the day, kept the Chapel open all summer. The morning service was thinly attended, except by the instructers and pupils of the school; the afternoon gave us rather fuller numbers, which slowly increased as the season advanced. I could not but regret that circumstances arose, which prevented me from giving to the increase of this audience that care and attention,

which the object most richly deserved, and upon which its success was almost wholly dependent. Dr Tuckerman was called from the city during a considerable part of the summer and fall of 1832, to collect the necessary information for the Report of the Commission on the Pauper Laws, upon which he had been placed by the Legislature. On his return, the arrangement of these materials cost him a great deal of time and labor. He resumed his visits among the poor after his Report had been brought before the public. But his exertions had been such as greatly to impair his health and strength. In the spring of this year he was obliged to travel south for his health. On returning to Boston he became seriously ill; and early in July he left the country, in company with a friend who had kindly and providentially offered him the opportunity of a tour in Europe.

Mr Gray was also obliged to be absent from the duties of our Ministry. In the beginning of the past spring he removed to Brooklyn, Conn., to pursue his studies with the Rev. S. J. May.

I was thus left, a large part of the year, with the numerous calls from all parts of the city, to distract my time and attention from any one point.

In pursuance of the plans we had marked out to ourselves, I gave my particular care, as far as I could, to the south-end, which drew me still more away from the neighborhood of the Friend Street Chapel. In the beginning of the present month, Mr Gray returned to labor with me. The chapel called for our immediate attention. It was soon put in thorough repair, and well painted. An organ was placed in it by one of its friends. Mr Gray commenced his services on the 6th instant, under the

most encouraging prospects. The Rev. Mr Taylor and the Rev. Mr Himes took part with us the first evening; and a crowded audience was present to encourage our hearts. The numbers which have since attended have fully answered our most sanguine hopes. The services, as they have been arranged for the present, will be a morning service for the children, which it is hoped their parents will also attend; and a regular service each afternoon and evening.

It gives me pleasure to state that the Howard Sunday School, connected with this chapel, is in a flourishing condition. Its numbers are quite full. The attendance is punctual, and the teachers have every reason to trust that the good work is prospering in their hands. At the south-end I became early acquainted with several children, belonging to no Sunday school. Many of them I was able to gather together both parts of each Lord's day, in the vestry of the Rev. Mr Pierpont's church, which had been kindly opened for the purpose, by the Standing Committee of the Society. The number of my pupils increased very slowly. In attempting to enlarge it, I found that I was interfering with the plans of the friends of several schools, already established in that part of the city, and especially so with those of the Hollis Street Sunday School. The teachers and superintendents noticed the same circumstance, on their part. Mutual advances were accordingly soon made for a union of the two schools. This was effected in November, 1832; and continues to the present date to satisfy the wishes of both parties. The friends of the old school have the satisfaction of seeing large numbers of children drawn to their classes from the families of the

poor. I have found an ample provision, always ready to be made, for whatever children I have met with in want of a Sunday school. I have also received great pleasure, and no slight assistance, from my connection with the large body of teachers in this school. They have sympathized strongly in the great objects of my mission. They have become visiters, with me, of the poor ; and I can recall many cases in which they have rendered me most efficient aid. I have long looked upon our united schools as the centre of action for all my future operations at the south-end. We have had a very large number of pupils the past year. The average attendance for several Sundays in the hottest part of summer, was 150. The attendance is considered as regular one half of the day, and as optional the other. The chapel in my section of the city will be opened as soon as circumstances will permit. The number of families with which I have become connected in my ministry is 348 ; and I have made among them 2550 visits.

I have thus presented you with the outline of my labors. It recalls to my memory many of the happiest hours and happiest scenes of my life. I never shall cease to thank God for the work to which he has called me. Should it please him that I am to be continued in my present occupation, I shall most cheerfully devote to it my time and attention till I leave the world. It is true, that I have met with trial and disappointment in my labors among the poor ; but, as these have been the offspring of sin, they certainly present to all who love their race the highest claims, and the strongest motives, to labor in extending the sway of Christian salvation.

Permit me, in this communication with you, to express

my hearty thanks to the many friends whose sympathy and support have been kindly extended to me in my ministry. I bless God for the gift of such friends — I rejoice in them — and, into whatever hands our mission shall hereafter pass, I am glad in the hope that these supporters of the good cause will ever be found to give, under the Providence of our Heavenly Father, the surest pledge of its success. The end of that great work, in which my associates and I have been made instruments, — the physical and moral improvement of man ; his deliverance from suffering and sin ; the recovery, advancement, and salvation of the human race — has been ordained by God, and revealed by Christ, in close dependence upon the wide diffusion of the spirit of universal love.

From the outline of my ministry I cannot pass to any more detailed accounts, having private reasons to prevent me ; nor can I, at present, enter into the discussion of any of the principles of our work, as my degrees of experience and opinion are yet those of a learner. Let me pass, then, to a part of our plan, which we are just putting into operation, and which we are desirous of making an object of general attention.

Before Dr Tuckerman left the city, we had succeeded in procuring a room in a central part of the city. This room has been opened since Mr Gray's return, under the name of 'The Office of the Visitors of the Poor.' It is in the basement story of the Saving's Bank, Tremont Street. We shall make it our own place of business ; and we wish to have it considered as open to all who visit the poor.

Our city, as is well known, presents an instance of

enlarged benevolent action. We have long had many Societies among us devoted to the relief of the destitute. The number, of late years, has been considerably increased. And these numerous associations have large funds at their disposal. This is well. But it must be obvious, that the great charity thus put into operation, presents itself in a very questionable character, unless there be some concert and understanding between the several different societies, which are its organs. Union of purpose, to a certain extent, and mutual acquaintance with each other's operations, are indispensably necessary to the almoners of public and private benevolence, if they have any other and better purpose in view, than that of swelling the list of their pensioners, or augmenting the sum total of the funds expended. It is here that we have hitherto been deficient. Our various societies have acted almost wholly independently of each other. The error has produced its fruits. The comparison of the Records of these societies will show not a few names of families, or individuals, who have been receiving assistance from them all. This remark is grounded upon actual examination. We could refer, were so public an exposure called for, to many who have been long accustomed to look for relief of their actual, or imaginary sufferings, to every source to which they can obtain access. In too many cases, this has been done without their giving the least information that they have applied to more than one benevolent society. To illustrate this, we could bring forward some of the not infrequent instances in which, upon examination, we have found that a family has received the visits and assistance of Dr Tuckerman, or one of his assistants, for months, without ever affording us the slightest intimation of the visits

and assistance it had at the same time been receiving from Mr Gooch, Dr Eaton, or some other of the several Missionaries to the Poor. We are extremely desirous of bringing about a better state of things, by calling the attention of the various societies to the subject; and we hope that many of them will be willing to use our room as a place of mutual conference and advice upon the objects they are pursuing. We shall soon take steps to call some general meeting of the Standing, or Visiting Committees of these societies; and shall most cheerfully give our assistance, in any way they may approve, to render the distribution of charity a matter of systematic and enlightened action. A Record has already been opened, in which are to be entered the names, character, occupation, &c., as far as they can be learned, of all who are known to apply for assistance in the city. Its pages may be consulted by those who are desirous of the information it may contain. And all who visit, or know the poor, are respectfully requested to transmit such intelligence, as may promise to be of any service. We have occasion, even at this early date, to thank our friends for the assistance of this kind which they have rendered us.

Again. *The relief of suffering*, there is reason to fear, has been in too many cases pursued, both by individuals and societies, to the disregard or injury of *the prevention of pauperism*, another duty of as plain obligation, and itself as truly a work of benevolence as the former. In consequence of this neglect, pauperism has increased among us to an extent which the prosperity of our community, and its improvement in other respects, certainly do not warrant. Individuals have learned to *calculate* upon the assistance of benevolent societies. Indepen-

dence of character and exertion have thus been destroyed and the field opened for the growth of poverty and want. We have often been told by those, who have applied to us for aid, that hitherto they had supplied their own necessities through their own industry, but that now they had adopted another course, to which they had been urged by the importunities of some friend, expatiating upon the plans and means of the many charitable associations, and dwelling upon the plea that they had as good a right to such assistance as any who received it. Let such a state of things proceed a little farther, as unchecked as it is at present, and we shall be overwhelmed with the claimants of public and private alms.

The subject has already attracted public attention in England. The American translation 'of the Visitor of the Poor,' from the French of the Baron de Gerando, has been re-published in that country, with a valuable preface bearing the initials of the Rev. J. R. Beard, of Manchester. We quote his words: — 'The recent report of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the working of the poor-laws, shows but too clearly, that the administration of the large sums annually collected for the relief of the poor, serves even to extend poverty and foster vice. Our institutions for the dispensations of charity are in some cases productive of similar effects; witness the exemplification, in an individual case, of the operation of various local charities, given in the following passage, taken from the report of the commissioners before alluded to, being part of the evidence of the rector of Christ Church, Spitalfields, and certified by his own *personal observation*.' The passage which follows is too long for insertion. It takes

the case of a newly married couple, and passes through the life of one of their children, enumerating the various benevolent societies upon whose aid he may rely at different junctures. The evidence is thus closed : — 'In this uniform alternation of voluntary and compulsory relief, he draws towards the close of his mendicant existence. Before leaving the world, he might, perhaps, return thanks to the public. He has been *born for nothing* — he has been *nursed for nothing* — he has been *clothed for nothing* — he has been *educated for nothing* — he has been *put out in the world for nothing* — he has had *medicine and medical assistance for nothing ;* he has had his children also *born, nursed, clothed, fed, educated, established,* and *physicked for nothing.*' What a perversion does this present of that life which God designed for his children in their present existence. To those who reflect upon the evil consequences of this ministering to improvidence and dependence, with what serious import are the remarks clothed, with which the writer of the preface we referred to, concludes his review of this evidence ; — 'Alms-giving does not remove but extends poverty. It is a check on individual exertion. It is a bribe to idleness. It undermines independence of character. It prevents forethought, by taking away the necessity of it ; and makes the destructive maxim of 'let us live while we may,' the chief, if not the sole principle of action through life.'

The subject has also awakened attention in our own country. A society has been formed in New York 'for the promotion of knowledge and industry.' The language in which they address the public is this : — 'The increased, and increasing extent of pauperism in our

city, presents a subject for the most serious consideration. This is what we should expect from the overcrowded population, and amidst the decrepid political establishments of Europe; but it stands in an unnatural contrast with our unequalled prosperity, and with the general health, vigor, and freshness of our political institutions. . . . . The general design of the society is to improve the intellectual, moral, and physical condition of the poor. Its primary and specific objects will be to extend the advantages of education to the children of the indigent — to discourage their employment in hawking, peddling, street-begging, and pilfering; to establish the necessary schools for the instruction of adults — to abolish indiscriminate alms-giving — to visit the poor at their habitations — to give them counsel — to aid them in obtaining employment — to inspire them with self-respect — to inculcate habits of economy, industry, and temperance, and whenever it shall be absolutely necessary, to provide, through the aid of private individuals, and of the public authorities, relief for their necessities. It is impossible to know where the care of such an association is most wanted, without a personal acquaintance with all who are its appropriate objects. It is intended that this care shall assume the character of paternal guardianship. It is designed to establish a general and friendly intercourse with the poor, which shall secure a thorough knowledge of their actual condition, and enable us to apply the best means for its improvement. It is by such an intercourse only that we can assure them of our sympathy, bring them under its moral influence, and multiply among them the proper means and inducements to depend upon their own exertions for the comforts of life. It is only by the knowl-

edge which will result from such an intercourse, and which will embrace every section of the city, that we can hope to minister relief, when necessary, with sound discrimination, and without which, it would be a curse rather than a blessing.'

'It is a distinguishing feature of this society, that it is intended, not only to reach every family and every individual who may need its aid, but that instead of being limited to a particular description of necessities, it shall embrace the want of knowledge, of instruction, of advice, of employment, and of the necessaries of life. In short, it is intended that the poor shall look to the society for their advisers, their protectors, and their benefactors, under all the trials to which they may be exposed.' 'If our labors shall be successful,' add the friends of this society, 'they will probably result in a general reform of our system of providing for the poor, — they can hardly fail in any event to produce an immense melioration of their condition.'

A part of the measures here recommended are already in operation in our own community. But much yet remains to be done. It is hoped that the Office we have opened will afford facilities for effecting the whole of the good work. In our ministry to the poor we have always looked upon it as highly desirable to bring about a more extended connexion of the different classes of society. And we rejoice in the prospect, which we now have, of being better able to accomplish this than we ever were before.

As far as vagrancy, street begging, with its long train of evils, and that practice of imposition which too many have been following for years in our city, — are concerned, we are determined to attempt to check

their evil tendency at once. A large number of tickets, bearing the direction of our Office, has been printed. These will be sold for the benefit of our poor's purse, at a dollar a dozen. And we most earnestly desire all members of our community who have its improvement at heart, whenever they do not know, or cannot inquire into, the circumstances of the applicants for their aid, to put one of these tickets into their hands, or to take some other measures that shall serve as a check upon deception and sin.

Our poor's purse has been scantily supplied during the summer. Let me here thank the many friends who supplied it. May God grant me wisdom and direction in the future disposal of their bounty. The ladies of 'the sewing circle' have rendered very opportune assistance to our resources the present season. Our room and its conveniences will enable us to make a more economical use of our means than in former years. We shall always gladly receive whatever articles benevolent individuals may be pleased to intrust to our disposal, as clothes, tracts, books, &c.

Respectfully,

CHARLES F. BARNARD.

P. S. The last accounts from Dr Tuckerman left him at Brussels, August 26th, in fine health and spirits. We have received very favorable accounts of Mr Arnold's zeal and labors as a minister at large in the city of New York. The work is prospering in his hands.

C. F. B.

OCT. 22d, 1833.'

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RELIGIOUS OPINIONS

AND

EXAMPLE

OF

MILTON, LOCKE,

AND

NEWTON.

BY REV. HENRY ACTON,
OF EXETER, ENGLAND.

PRINTED FOR THE
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RELIGIOUS OPINIONS

OF

MILTON, LOCKE, AND NEWTON.

In the matters of Christian faith and obedience, we are cautioned by an Apostle, not to *glory in men*. There can be no reasonable apology for our doing so. Have we not much higher sources of spiritual wisdom, in the plainest lessons of scripture, than are to be met with in the profoundest thoughts of the most gifted of uninspired mortals? In the formation of our religious opinions and habits, therefore, we should be careful that our views are not determined, not too much influenced, by the mere authority of great names, whether in the Church or in the World. We are bound to embrace, not that which may chance to have been believed by others, however illustrious for their talents, for their characters or their services, but that which appears to our own understandings to be true in doctrine, or right in practice, according to the teaching of Christ and his Apostles, contained in the sacred volume and

interpreted by the light of private judgment. There is no sounder, no more important principle of religious inquiry, than this. The full recognition of it is demanded on the strongest grounds of reason and experience. It involves at once the first privilege and the first obligation of our christian calling. If we neglect it, — if one says, I am of this great Divine, another, I am of that eminent Philosopher, — *are we not carnal?* It is plain we are strangers to the proper spirit of the gospel, which was meant to free us from this, and every other kind of moral bondage, with a solemn yet generous kind of liberty : it makes religion entirely a concern between our own individual souls and the God whom we serve ; our only Master being Christ, and truth and duty our only objects of veneration.

But when this principle is admitted, as it must be, it does not seem to follow, that we are forbidden to bestow any *serious attention* on the religious opinions and example of great men. Such forbearance would not be possible, even if it were at all to be recommended, — which it is not. Great men are usually endowed with means of *enforcing* attention to whatever they think and do, in matters of such deep and universal interest as those of religion. We all have a desire (is it not a rational desire ?) to become acquainted with the views and feelings entertained, on sacred subjects, by men of great moral worth, or high intellectual distinction ; not, indeed, for our absolute guidance, but for our gratification, instruction and improvement. It is natural to expect they may edify us in many things ; and if, in other things, we find their

sentiments erroneous, or think their example not to be imitated, through that liberty in Christ already mentioned we have the right of rejecting whatever we seriously disapprove.

With these explanations, I enter on the present subject. I am to treat of the religious opinions and example of MILTON, LOCKE, and NEWTON.

Three names more highly and justly renowned, it would not be easy to select from the annals of the republic of letters, or of the whole civilized world. Which should be accounted the greatest, I will not take upon me to affirm. In many respects, the minds, the characters, the performances of these illustrious men, differed widely; but all were truly great. And when the dissimilarity in persons or objects is so considerable, whilst the excellence of all is so vast, any comparison, with a view to determine the relative superiority of either, becomes a vain and impossible task.

Who shall say, whether the starry heavens, or the smiling earth, or the tranquil ocean, is to be esteemed the *most* beautiful object in nature? They are all *too* beautiful to admit of any such question; and the true lover of nature must admire them all. There would be a like and an equal difficulty, in deciding which of these extraordinary men is to be held greater than the others. The rays of their intellectual splendor are of different kinds and hues, like those which Newton first discovered in the beams of the sun; but like them also, all are bright and beautiful. Their works survive them, and will live for ever. The achieve-

ments of one in sacred song, and of the others in true philosophy, are a part of the unfading glory of this nation. The world has assigned them each a place in that temple of immortal fame, where the memory of great characters is enshrined for the worship of posterity : and all who revere wisely-directed genius, in whatever way its energies may be manifested ; all who love the voice of poetry; all who bow before the majesty of science ; all who venerate philosophic truth and wisdom, will gladly pay the honors of admiration to all or either of these great names.

To Milton we are indebted for the production, in our own language, of that particular work of genius, which would seem to be an almost necessary monument of a great people's glory and refinement. I mean a complete and imperishable Epic Poem. In imitation of the two famous poets of antiquity, and with a genius not inferior to theirs, Milton seized on a subject which, in its principal outlines, was already familiar to the thoughts and affections of the Christian people for whom he wrote, — the story of man's primeval innocence and miserable fall. How he has treated that story, few or none of my readers can require to be told. He found in it, or rather created out of it, innumerable sources of eloquent thought, concerning all high and gracious things, human and divine. He has adorned it with countless images of purity and happiness, of tenderness and sorrow, of transcendent beauty and solemn grandeur ; images that flow in upon our minds in a perpetual stream of sweet sounds. And in this way, he has prepared

an exhaustless fountain of delight, for all those who desire, from time to time, when wearied with the dull realities of life, to refresh their souls at the springs of poetic inspiration.

In regard to Locke, his fame rests chiefly on his incomparable work, the 'Essay concerning Human Understanding.' In that work, judged according to the circumstances in which he was placed, he undoubtedly displayed wonderful powers of penetration and analysis, and a most noble spirit of patient research. The very manner in which he set about his investigations, affords a bright example to all philosophers. He looked for truth where alone it can certainly be found, not in books and systems, but in nature, and especially in the conscious dictates of his own vast and cultivated mind. By these means, he was enabled to reveal, in a great degree, the mysteries of our intellectual nature; the very constitution, as it were, of our minds; the most subtile operations of that godlike faculty of reason, by which we are distinguished from the brutes. To him we are indebted for laying anew, on a better and broader basis, the foundations of that most useful science, which teaches us, in a highly important sense, 'to know ourselves;' to perceive by what methods the correction and extension of our knowledge is to be most surely pursued. Whatever errors he may be thought chargeable with, — errors brought to light by subsequent discoveries which he mainly contributed to promote, — the composition of his work was undoubtedly one of the great strides, by which the true philosophy of the human mind has advanced to its present forward position.

Of both Milton and Locke, however, it may be justly observed, that apart from their great productions, on which their everlasting reputation is built, they each wrote enough to immortalize the names of any other men. The prose works of Milton, and the writings of Locke on education, on religious toleration and civil government, on almost every subject connected with the improvement and happiness of mankind, are amongst the most admirable productions in our language : they would alone have entitled their authors to the character of great men. Both lived in critical times for the safety and freedom of their native land : and setting 'Paradise Lost,' and the 'Essay concerning Human Understanding,' entirely out of view, both would be men ever to be revered, for the zeal with which they devoted their stupendous abilities to the defence of those principles of civil and religious liberty, for which their country has long been distinguished.

With respect to Newton, perhaps the *results* though not the *process*, of his researches, are still more familiar to the popular mind. By his sublime discoveries, concerning the laws and phenomena of the material universe, he opened a way for the ascent of physical science to the loftiest and clearest regions of demonstration ; from which it never can sink again into the cloudy atmosphere of conjecture. Rising on the wings of his eagle-like genius to almost superhuman heights of observation, he fixed his steady, unblenching gaze, on the great orbs of light that shine so gloriously above us. Then, descending again to earth, he was able to teach us ordinary mortals, *how* God directs the sun and

moon in their courses — *by what methods* He marshals the stars of heaven in order.

In strict propriety, I have no concern at present with the labors and characters of these great men, otherwise than as they relate to the important subject of religion. But I thought I should be pardoned for this brief allusion to their notorious merits, previous to the observations I am now about to make on their religious opinions and example. I hope to shew there is much which is common to all three, and which is highly interesting and edifying, in the characters of Milton, Locke, and Newton, regarded in this particular point of view. It is remarkable, indeed, that, notwithstanding the diversity in their circumstances, and in their natural genius, there was great similarity both in their sentiments and conduct with respect to the Christian religion. This will appear as I proceed.

I. Let me first call your attention, then, to the general consideration, that Milton, Locke, and Newton, were Christians. They were decided believers in the truth of the Christian religion ; and that, not from mere prejudice of education, but on due reflection, with an extensive knowledge of the subject, from rational and deliberate conviction. They had seriously thought of, they had closely examined, the pretensions of the gospel, as a system of divine revelation ; and the result to their minds was a settled persuasion of its heavenly origin and authority. Is not this something, in favor of the religion itself which they thus embraced ?

There is an impression on some people's minds, that men of genius since the revival of letters, men of sur-

passing talents and vast attainments, have in general been secret or avowed unbelievers in Christianity. This has been sometimes presumptuously affirmed by sceptical writers, as though it were an almost universal truth. It is still oftener covertly assumed, or insinuated, by the enemies of the gospel, as a fact not to be doubted indeed, but to be hinted at rather than told. But though the instances of this may be many, sufficiently numerous to be the subject of sincere regret to every enlightened Christian, there is yet no truth in the assumption, that men eminent for their talents have, in general, been unbelievers in the divinity of the Christian faith. The contrary is the truth ; it has been so in all ages of the Church, and it is so now. Although, doubtless, from a very early period, down to some notorious late examples, there have been men holding a high rank in the world of letters, who have utterly disbelieved, or partially assailed, (for they are not the same thing,) the truth of our most excellent religion ; yet the sanction of the majority of great characters is unquestionably and largely on the side of belief. Every person may be convinced of this, by a careful inspection of any good list of illustrious names, especially as far as relates to our own country. And even in regard to the too numerous instances of learned and philosophic sceptics, I cannot but think there have long been so many circumstances in the corrupt state of the Christian church and doctrine, peculiarly adapted to disgust their minds with a religion which they viewed in such a false light, that their unbelief is not to be very seriously thought of. It is too easily accounted for, on these and other equally obvious grounds,

to be of any authority as against the pure gospel. In many cases, it has not been properly the Christian religion which they have rejected. I judge this to be so, because it has certainly not been the Christian religion which they have attacked ; but only the gross errors which deluded men have mingled with that religion. Even lettered unbelievers have not often assailed the *evidences*, but usually the supposed *doctrines*, of Christianity : and it is a speaking fact, that they have always shown an inclination to assume the correctness of the worst, out of the many forms, in which Christianity has been held. In this they have displayed a lamentable want of candor ; for surely, in attempting to prove the falsehood of a religion claiming to be divine, it was binding on them to ascertain what the real principles of that religion are, by a careful study of its original records. Had learned sceptics taken this course, qualified as many of them were for the task by their abilities and attainments, the consequences might often have been most happy. Like him who entered the temple of God to blaspheme, but remained to praise, they might have become the ablest champions of the very faith which they thought to overthrow. Besides, even when unbelievers have made the evidence of Christianity at all the object of their attack, they have never, to the best of my knowledge, fairly grappled with that evidence *as a body ;* but have only exercised their ingenuity in weakening *certain parts* of it ; apparently assuming, that if each part be not of itself entirely free from objection, the whole must be given up as indefensible ; which is by no means a sound conclusion. For, however paradoxical it may seem, it is true, that in mor-

al inquiries the whole is often greater than all its parts; the very concentration of so many distinct arguments upon one point being, in itself, a new and most forcible kind of evidence. The combination binds, as it were, the numerous and various probabilities together, and, united in one mass, they become demonstration. What would be thought of the Judge who, in summing up the evidence on a trial, should, in order to favor one side, employ his utmost skill in raising objections to one or two of the principal or even subordinate points, leaving all the others untouched, and especially taking no notice of the distinct and important consideration, that so many things should appear to have one bearing? I suppose he would not be greatly admired, either for his impartiality or his acuteness. Another circumstance is, that learned unbelievers, in rejecting the commonly received hypothesis of the divine origin of Christianity, have seldom or never thought themselves called on to show the reasonableness of any other positive and complete view of the subject. Yet, as philosophers they ought to know, that in this case, as in every other, *something* must be true; the phenomena must have a cause; and the thinking portion of mankind will feel but little obliged to them, for unsettling their actual views of so important a matter, without giving them any other views which can satisfy a clear and sound judgment. To raise objections against any, even the strongest, moral evidence, is a very easy task indeed. But the business of an accomplished inquirer is, to weigh the objections and probabilities on both sides; and then carefully to mark and firmly to abide by the result. For these and similar reasons; on account of

the manifest prejudice with which many lettered sceptics have regarded Christianity ; on account of the imperfect and unfair manner in which they have generally discussed the subject ; but chiefly, on account of the false light in which they have almost always viewed the *doctrines* of the gospel ; for these reasons, I cannot allow that their unbelief is to be very seriously thought of, considered as authority against the genuine Christian religion.

But whatever judgment be passed on these remarks, let me entreat you to remember, that the three great ornaments of our country, and of our nature, to whom my present observations relate, *were not sceptics.* They were deliberate and earnest believers in the divinity of the gospel. In their eyes, this religion was not a cunningly devised fable ; not a plot devised by priests and rulers to enslave the minds of the ignorant multitude ; not a system originating entirely in the superstition of the dark ages ; but in the energetic words of Locke himself, a religion which has 'God for its author, Salvation for its end, and Truth without any mixture of error for its matter.' To their apprehensions, there was no want of evidence for the genuineness and authenticity of the Christian scriptures ; for the reality of the Christian miracles ; for the divine mission of Christ ; for the truth, the wisdom, the divinity of his teaching. *Their* penetration was not sufficiently strong, to discover any of those manifest signs of fraud, with which Christianity has been said to be attended ; though we cannot forget, that one of them had penetration to discern the most secret workings of the human intellect, and the other to discern those laws and motions of the universe, which

had been hidden from the knowledge of men since the world was created. They looked, long and steadily, with their searching gaze, into the sacred edifice of Christian truth; and *they* could see nothing of that disproportion and deformity, with which some others have professed themselves to be so grievously offended. This may perhaps be called boasting on our part. But I contend that, if it is boasting, it is likewise argument. It *is* one presumptive argument in favor of Christianity, (as against its ordinary assailants at least,) that it has been inquired into by such men as these, and pronounced by them to be true and divine. It *is* some presumption of its being pure and solid truth, that it was weighed carefully in the balance of their accurate and profound judgments, and declared by them to be not wanting. Such is the real state of the case; and it deserves to be repeatedly considered. It is not merely, that Milton, Locke, and Newton, were ostensible professors of the gospel. It is not merely, that they never thought proper openly to oppugn the truth of the Christian religion; that they suffered themselves to pass for believers in the eyes of the world; that from habit, or education, or philosophic indifference, or regard to public decency, they were content to worship in Christian churches, and to treat the popular religion of their day with outward respect. If this were all, their example would be of little worth in the estimation of any rational inquirer. But the circumstances are very different. These noble-minded men had diligently and deeply studied Christianity. They have each left us writings which show that, with all the aid of great knowledge and great natural sagacity combined, they had

thoroughly searched the scriptures, had inquired into the origin and history of the Christian faith. And the result of these studies, the end of this search, the issue of these inquiries, conducted by such minds, was a most determined conviction of the truth of the gospel, and an ardent attachment to all its heavenly principles.

I say again, that this is not empty boasting. It is fair presumptive argument. It well becomes the rash and superficial unbeliever to take it into his serious consideration. The Christian religion is encompassed with an exceeding great number and variety of these indirect supports ; by which a mind accustomed finely to discriminate these delicate signs of truth and error, in moral questions, will not fail to be suitably affected. The fact, that Christianity has become, and still continues to be, distinctively, the religion of the civilized parts of the earth ; the powerful influence which it has had over the minds and manners of the most enlightened nations, and we may safely add, of the most enlightened individuals ; the close and searching ordeal of inquiry to which it has often been subjected by the strongest understandings, usually coming forth like gold tried and purified in the furnace ; these, indeed, are not our proofs that Christianity *is* true ; but these are considerations which ought to ensure an humble and patient investigation of the question of its truth from every man, whatever may be the supposed strength of his own mind, or the extent of his knowledge. It has been sufficiently explained, I trust, that we do not desire to see the truth of the gospel blindly assumed on the mere credit due to other men's belief. Let every one, whatever may be the mediocrity of his talents or attain-

ments, search and judge for himself on this momentous subject. It is his right, his duty, so to do. But let him bear in mind, that both at the period of its first publication, and again in modern times, the gospel has been rigidly examined by men wiser and better than himself, who have rejoiced and gloried in their belief of its divine authority. From these circumstances let him draw this fair presumption, that whether he perceive it at present or not, *there must be* some very weighty evidence for Christianity ; it cannot be a mere groundless imposture, unworthy the attention of a man of cultivated intellect ; its claims to the belief and reverence of mankind cannot be so contemptible, as to justify him in passing them all over without the slightest consideration. This is the only deference for human authority which, as earnest advocates for the pure Christian religion, we should ever wish to demand. It is no more than would be granted in every similar case. It is no more than all modest and sensible men are accustomed to pay to principles which have long had the high sanction of the great and good.

II. In the next place, I observe that Milton, Locke, and Newton, were free inquirers. These illustrious men were '*more noble*' than many others, ' in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.' They were bright examples of the exercise of free inquiry, and private judgment, in religious matters. It was not enough for them, tamely to fall in with the profession of the popular sentiments and reputed orthodoxy of their age. Not content to take their views of Christianity entirely from the creeds and articles of the

Church in which they had been brought up, — too ingenuous to allow their minds to be bound down to the passive reception of such *systems of theology*, as proud and dominant sects had contrived to establish by human authority, — they felt it to be both a duty and a pleasure, to study the Christian religion thoroughly, not only in respect to its general truth, but also in order to ascertain its particular doctrines, commandments, and institutions. Thus far, at least, they acted the part of sincere and consistent disciples of their Master, Jesus Christ: they used their own free judgments in settling their views of his teaching, according to their own diligent study and private interpretation of the holy scriptures.

This feature of their characters will be made more conspicuous, when I come to speak of their actual opinions on subjects of Christian belief; which were so different, on many points, from the prevailing notions both of their own times and of the present. But it is too well known to require this proof, that they were bold, industrious inquirers, concerning the sense of scripture and the particular truths of the gospel. Their published writings show them to have been such. They are theological authors; and their works manifest, that they did not think it an unworthy employment of their great powers, to spend years of toil and study, in cultivating an intimate acquaintance with the riches of divine wisdom contained in the holy scriptures; and that in their researches after truth, they were wholly unbiassed by any human systems.

In regard to Milton, many passages in his life and writings clearly prove, that his mind, 'in the spacious circuits of her musing,' frequently ventured, with all

her natural boldness and freedom, among the heights and depths of revealed knowledge, and brought back treasures of heavenly truth for her recompense. But if there could have been any doubt as to his habits in this respect, it must have been completely removed, by the recent discovery of his 'Treatise on Christian Doctrine, compiled from the Holy Scriptures alone'; — one of the most interesting events in the history of modern literature. In this treatise, Milton appears in the character of a free and fearless inquirer into the doctrines of revelation; a laborious student of Christianity, as it is taught in the sacred scriptures. He has there entered into a full investigation of all the principal controverted questions of christian theology. He has stated and defended his own private sentiments, the convictions left upon his mind after a close and serious attention to the words of the inspired writers, accompanied, as he assures us, with solemn prayer for guidance to the Father of lights, but with no slavish respect for the opinions of men.*

The example of Locke, in this particular, is too well known to require many words. His theological works

* His own words in the preface to his work are remarkable, and highly characteristic of his mind: 'Since it is only to the individual faith of each that the Deity has opened the way of eternal salvation, and as He requires that he who would be saved should have a personal belief of his own, I resolved not to repose on the faith or judgment of others in matters relating to God; but, on the one hand, having taken the grounds of my faith from divine revelation alone, and on the other, having neglected nothing which depended on my own industry, I thought fit to scrutinize and ascertain for myself the several points of my religious belief, by the most careful perusal and meditation of the holy scriptures themselves.'

have long been before the world, and are highly valued by all who take pleasure in the rational study of the sacred writings. His 'Essay on the Reasonableness of Christianity, as delivered in the Scriptures,' and his 'Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of Paul,' must ever rank among the most original, and, (the latter work especially, on account of its influence on subsequent writings,) among the most important productions in English theology. Locke may be considered as the founder of a school of sound and enlightened scriptural commentary in this country; that school which seeks to ascertain the true meaning of the scriptures, by the help of solid learning, by the light of historical facts, by the knowledge of ancient opinions, manners, and customs; by diligent comparison of one part of holy writ with another, and a due regard to the original and proper aim of the several writers; by the same methods, in short, as we employ to ascertain the sense of all other ancient books; — instead of idly affixing to them any arbitrary and fanciful interpretations, in accordance with modern popular systems. What has been lately published of his more private and unfinished lucubrations, shows still further how closely he was addicted to these pursuits, and with what a happy combination of diligence and judgment he carried them on. But, without anticipating what I shall presently have to say, concerning the results of his scriptural studies, I confine myself now to the simple fact, that the writings of this most able and excellent man prove that he, like Milton, was a free and serious inquirer on religious subjects. He was neither careless nor slavish, in respect to his views on the momentous topics of christian

faith. He did not think himself bound, in any way, to submit his understanding to the implicit belief of established creeds. He did not consider himself to be stepping out of his province, as a layman and a private Christian, when he devoted himself to the patient study of the New Testament, for the purpose of distinguishing the pure doctrines of the gospel from the traditions of a corrupted church. He did not look upon the independent study and faithful exposition of the sacred writings as an occupation unworthy of a great philosopher. He was not content to regard this as the exclusive business of divines by profession; while *his* duty was simply and submissively to receive what the ecclesiastical authorities of his day pronounced to be orthodox. In a word, he was a noble example of the exercise of free inquiry and private judgment in the affairs of religion. I may add, that he has also furnished us with a noble instance of the benefits which might be expected to result, to the Christian world at large, from the general imitation of his example, by men endowed like him with great powers of intellect, and with a pure and disinterested spirit.

In reference to Newton, it may not be quite so generally known, perhaps, that he likewise was strongly devoted to habits of religious and scriptural inquiry. We are able, however, both from his writings, and from the testimony of friends, to rank him also among the illustrious of the earth who have set mankind this good example. The bent of his genius, probably, and his scientific attainments, led him to investigate the chronology of the sacred histories, and the meaning and fulfilment of prophecies. But his inquiries were not

confined to these subjects. He also engaged in pursuits of scriptural criticism and doctrinal interpretation. Locke himself, (who was assuredly no mean judge,) says of Newton, 'In the knowledge of the scriptures I know of but few men who are his equals.' In particular, he wrote an elaborate treatise concerning the corruption of two passages of scripture, frequently appealed to in support of the doctrine of the Trinity. By profound learning, and deep research into the remains of christian antiquity, he endeavored to prove that one of these texts (1 John v. 7.) is entirely spurious; and that in the other, (1 Tim. iii. 16.) there has been a gross corruption, by the insertion of the word '*God*' where it was not found in the original scriptures. On both points, the judgment of Newton has been confirmed, and his opinion adopted, by subsequent scholars of every sect and nation.

These three great characters, then, it appears, were free inquirers in religion, and diligent students of the holy scriptures. In this respect, they gave an example, which it had been well for the Christian world if their successors, the sons of genius in after times, had faithfully copied. Religion surely claims, and merits, the best services of such men. They need not be ashamed to present the richest offerings of their superior intellect and accomplishment on her altars; not indeed by a servile homage to every superstition which may have usurped her name; but by a free and enlightened study of all her glorious truths, and of their infinitely diversified bearings upon human improvement and happiness; by seeking for themselves, and for others whom they were born to teach, out of the records of God's espe-

cial acts of providence, the knowledge of a pure, a rational, a sublime and blissful theology. Why should they, of all men, deem the highest subjects of human knowledge unfit or unworthy to occupy their attention ? Why should they, of all men, submit to be blindly guided, in these solemn and sacred matters, by the dull expounders of false and antiquated creeds ? Is not the written word of God, as well as the natural creation of God, open to their inspection ? Are not all its beauties to be discerned and illustrated by the light of reason, which shines with unusual brightness in their souls ? Christianity is not a system of mysteries, to be interpreted only by chosen and initiated priests. There is no order of men who have received from heaven the exclusive right to study, to explain, and to teach *the glorious gospel of the blessed God.* The holy scriptures are not a book to be understood and expounded by the clergy alone : they are for every man's private perusal and private interpretation ; and, surely, not least for those to whom God has imparted the choice gifts of a superior mind, a quicker moral perception and sensibility, a deeper insight into the true, the great, the good, and the beautiful. Why, then, do such men so frequently neglect their duty in this particular ? Why do they disdain to exercise this noblest privilege of their gifted natures ? I declare that few things appear to me more melancholy, or more to be regretted, than to behold how the spirit which actuated the minds of Milton, Locke, and Newton, — a spirit of serious thoughtfulness, a spirit of profound reverence for moral and divine truths, a spirit of holy curiosity, and free and active research, on all subjects of religious belief, — has

departed from among the kindred children of light, the great poets and great philosophers, of more recent times. I can imagine nothing that would be a happier omen for the cause of Christian truth and reformation, than a revival, among studious, learned, and talented laymen, of the temper and practice of the three illustrious characters to whom our attention has now been directed. Another work of equal merit, (considering the difference of circumstances,) with Locke's 'Reasonableness of Christianity,' proceeding from the pen of a man of equal standing in the literary world, in the present day, would probably do more for the best interests of divine revelation, than all the professional teachers of religion, if left to themselves, are likely to effect for a century to come. There are those among the wise and eminent of this age, who might in this way do incalculable benefit to the interests of pure religion, if they had but the inclination and the courage to undertake the service. Would that some powerful voice could incite them to this honorable task; so that the glory of God might be promoted by their labors.

III. In the third place, I remark that Milton, Locke, and Newton, were Unitarians. Having shown that they were earnest Christian believers, and free scriptural inquirers, I observe that, in respect to their particular views of Christian doctrine, they were Unitarians. I am well aware that this has been, and still is, denied by some persons. I will not designedly mislead my hearers on this point, in the slightest degree. For this reason alone, I will content myself, at present, with saying that, in my opinion, to my own conviction, they were all three Unitarians. Only let it be clearly under-

stood, that I put the assertion in this qualified form, not because I have the slightest doubt on the subject myself, but only because I am aware that others profess to doubt it, and because I am anxious not to be charged with any misrepresentation or concealment in this matter.

For the same reason, I must also explain, that by styling these illustrious men Unitarians, I do not mean to affirm that they held all and exactly the same opinions, as are entertained by the generality of those who are called by the same name in the present day. I mean only, that they were Anti-trinitarians. They did not find in the scriptures the doctrine of three persons in one God. They were not believers in the true and proper deity of Jesus Christ. They regarded the Father as the only true God, in distinction from the popular doctrine, of God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, three coequal divine persons. And all who embrace such views, I consider to be justly described as Unitarians, whatever may be their opinions on other and minor points of Christian belief. Milton certainly, and Locke probably, believed in the pre-existence and super-human dignity of Jesus Christ, though not in his proper deity. Newton, I suspect, (for reasons which shall be given presently,) looked upon Jesus Christ as by nature truly and simply a human being; entrusted by God with divine powers, and a divine mission; sent by God to be the Saviour of the world; raised by Him from the dead, and exalted to glory and spiritual dominion at His right hand. But upon this I do not insist. I only contend, that these great men rejected the doctrine of the Trinity, with most of its kindred dogmas, and

therefore were Unitarians. A Unitarian is not necessarily a believer in the simple humanity of Christ. But still less is a Unitarian simply a believer in one God; for all Christians profess to believe in only one God. A Unitarian is a Christian who believes in the strict personal unity of the Godhead, — the sole deity of the Father, — in distinction from those who believe in the tri-personality of God. In this, the original and only proper sense of the term, we claim Milton, Locke, and Newton, as true Unitarians; and I do not see how any one, who impartially considers the evidence on the subject, can possibly deny the justice of our claims.

So far as relates to Milton, then, there is now no room for the least difference of opinion on the subject of his heterodoxy. It cannot be forgotten, indeed, that until lately, all suspicions of his unsoundness in the faith, according to the popular standard, were accustomed to be scouted by the religious world at large, as imputations upon his fair fame; and were thought to be sufficiently confuted by a simple appeal to a few high-sounding passages in his poetical writings. But this delusion has passed away, since the recent discovery of his theological work: it is now proved, that Anti-trinitarians were right in suspecting they might claim this great spirit as a brother, in worshipping the God of their fathers after the way which men call heresy. It is now as clearly evident that Milton was a Unitarian, as that the Apostle Paul was one; though, in my humble judgment, not a whit more so. In the production alluded to, he has made us fully acquainted with his theological views. He peremptorily denies the Trinity, and the equality of Christ with the Father. He enters into a

careful examination of all the texts and arguments commonly alleged in support of these doctrines; refuting the false conclusions drawn from them, very much in the same method as Unitarians of the present day. He asserts and maintains, that 'according to the scriptures, there is in reality but one true, independent, and supreme God,' and that, 'according to the testimony of Christ, delivered in the clearest terms, the Father is that one true God.'* He calls the Trinity, 'all that commonly-received drama of the personalities

* The following extract may afford the reader who has not seen the work, an opportunity of estimating the strength and clearness of Milton's opinion, on this cardinal point of christian doctrine: — 'Christ therefore agrees with the whole people of God, that the Father is that one and only God. For who can believe that the very first of the commandments would have been so obscure, and so ill understood by the Church through such a succession of ages, that two other persons, equally entitled to worship, should have remained wholly unknown to the people of God, and debarred of divine honors even to that very day? especially as God, where he is teaching his own people respecting the nature of their worship under the gospel, forewarns them that they would have for their God the one Jehovah whom they had always served, and David, (i. e. Christ,) for their King and Lord: Jerem. xxx. 9. In this passage Christ, such as God willed that he should be known or served by his people under the gospel, is expressly distinguished from the one God Jehovah, both by nature and title. Christ himself, therefore, the Son of God, teaches us nothing in the gospel respecting the one God but what the law had before taught, and every where clearly asserts him to be his Father. John xvii. 3, xx. 17. If therefore the Father be the God of Christ, and the same be our God, and if there be no other God but one, there can be no God beside the Father.' — pp. 90, 91. No writer ancient or modern, perhaps, ever stated the Unitarian doctrine, or the grounds of it, more forcibly than they are set forth in these words of Milton.

in the Godhead,' and represents it as entirely without foundation in the scriptures. He says also, in regard to divine worship, that 'as the Son uniformly pays worship and reverence to the Father alone, so he teaches us to follow the same practice.' On other portions of Christian doctrine, it must be allowed that the opinions of Milton approach somewhat more closely to the likeness of reputed orthodoxy; though still, not without some considerable variations. But then, it may be justly observed, that on the points now referred to, relating particularly to the nature and means of Christian redemption, the views of most scriptural Unitarians approximate more nearly to those of intelligent and rational Trinitarians of the present day, than is commonly imagined. I have no design, however, of insinuating that the sentiments of Milton on these subjects, were identical with those of modern Unitarians. I acknowledge they were not so. I only set him forth as agreeing with us on those grand questions, the sole, unrivalled deity, and exclusive worship, of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was therefore a Unitarian, as opposed to the general body of professing Christians, who are still believers in the Athanasian doctrine of the Trinity.

Let me next speak of Locke. It must be admitted, that we have no such direct and positive means of ascertaining what were *his* exact views on these important subjects. Although he published several works of a religious nature, and one in which he professedly unfolds the scheme of Christian redemption, he has no where stated either his belief, or his dissent, respecting the doctrines of the Trinity, and the personal Deity

of Jesus Christ. He has no where undertaken to discuss these subjects; nor even avowedly to explain his own opinions upon them. All the evidence that we can have, therefore, of his actual views on these topics, must be of a presumptive and circumstantial nature. But it may not be at all the less convincing on this account. Every intelligent person will readily acknowledge, that inferential evidence may be so full and so strong, as to produce an equally rational conviction with any other kind of evidence. Let us consider, then, what grounds there are for believing that Locke also must have been a Unitarian.

Now, surely, a strong presumption that this was the case arises from the simple fact, that he has never declared or expressed himself otherwise. Is it conceivable that any person really holding the doctrine of the Trinity, and its kindred dogmas, could have written two or three considerable and systematic works on Christian theology, — in which he professes to show what in apostolic times was accounted the essential faith of a Christian, as well as to explain the sense of a large portion, and that too the most doctrinal portion, of the New Testament scriptures, — and yet that he should never record his belief in these fundamental articles of his own creed? I say, is this conceivable? Can any other voluminous Trinitarian author be pointed out, who has acted in such a manner? Supposing this strange silence were in itself probable, or possible, what rational motive could have occasioned it, (for it must have required an effort,) in the instance of Locke? Every temptation must have been on the side of an open avowal of Trinitarian sentiments, if he had really en-

tertained them. It is easy enough to imagine a reason for his not choosing to declare himself, in plain terms, an unbeliever in the popular doctrines. He might think it not at all necessary, or wise, to expose himself to the additional obloquy which such an avowal would have brought upon him, in those times especially. But why, if he believed the doctrines of the Trinitarian system, he should so carefully have concealed his belief in this respect, is a problem not easily solved. Yet so it is; his writings are entirely Unitarian. I am not aware of a single sentiment in them which any Unitarian may not embrace; and of very little indeed which all Unitarians do not cordially believe and approve.* What rational doubt, then, can there be, that he himself embraced the same simple and glorious faith.

* The following are passages from Locke's 'Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of Paul,' in which he may naturally be expected to show the bias of his mind towards either the Trinitarian or Unitarian system of doctrine; and the reader, after perusing them, shall judge for himself, on which side the bias lay. He thus paraphrases Romans, ix. v. 5. 'Who had the patriarchs, to whom the promises were made, for their forefathers; and of them, as to his fleshy extraction, Christ is come; he who is over all, God be blessed for ever, Amen.' Plainly, he was of opinion, with most Unitarians, that the latter part of the verse is an ascription of blessedness to God, even the Father, and not to Christ. 1. Corin. i. v. 2. — '*all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.*' This passage he paraphrases thus,— 'all that every where *are called by the name* of Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours,' and in his note upon it he says, 'all that are called christians, these Greek words being a periphrasis for christians, as is plain from the design of this verse.' Plainly, therefore, he did not think, with Trinitarians, that this phraseology proves anything in regard to the

This presumption is strengthened by the fact, that he was vehemently suspected and charged with being a Unitarian, in his own times, on the publication of his 'Reasonableness of Christianity;' and that though he never expressly owned it, perhaps, yet he never denied it either. One of his theological assailants on that occasion tells him plainly, that his book was 'socinianized all over;' and even entitles his own reply to it, 'Socinianism Unmasked.' How did Locke receive this accusation? Even in such provoking circumstances, he never answered the charge by declaring, or so much as intimating, his faith in the Trinitarian doctrines; which surely would have been the plain, easy, natural, unavoidable answer to such a charge, if he had been a believer in those doctrines. But he only demands of his antagonist, what right he had to assail him

supreme worship of Christ by the early disciples. Ephes. iii. v. 9. '*And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.*' This he paraphrases thus: — 'lying hid in the secret purpose of God, who frames and manages *this whole new creation* by Jesus Christ;' and in his notes he says, — 'it is to be observed that St Paul often chooses to speak of the work of redemption by Christ as a creation.' Plainly, therefore, he had no attachment to the Trinitarian notion that Jesus Christ was the Creator of the world, but agreed with the Unitarians, that the passages in which creation is ascribed to our Saviour refer to the new moral economy of the gospel. Lastly, there are all those passages in which Paul speaks of the 'mysteries' of the gospel dispensation, (Rom. xvi. 25, 26. Ephes. i. 9. iii. 3 — 9. Coloss. i. 25 — 27) which Locke uniformly explains, not as Trinitarians usually do of their peculiar dogmas; but, as Unitarians do, of the calling of the Gentiles to the knowledge of the gospel, and other equally simple and reasonable truths.

with such an odious charge, when he had no where declared himself to be a Socinian, or undertaken to defend Socinian doctrines ? That is to say, being no sectarian polemic, but a free and independent inquirer after truth, he did not choose to acknowledge the justice of the epithet applied to him, nor to be drawn into a direct controversy on points of the Socinian creed. Still, he does not in the least modify his former sentiments. He still maintains, that if there are any other doctrines delivered in the New Testament, than those simple propositions set forth in his own work on the 'Reasonableness of Christianity,' (which he will neither be made to admit or to deny,) yet that they are certainly ' not such as our Saviour and his Apostles required to be believed, to make a man a Christian.'

By way of illustration merely, I would just observe, that there appears to be on these grounds as much evidence, and the same kind of evidence, for believing that Locke was a Unitarian, as there is for believing that Gibbon was a sceptic. The latter did not, in the celebrated chapters of his history, absolutely and expressly deny the divinity of the Christian religion ; did not avow himself an unbeliever, and openly take to himself the obnoxious name of infidel. And subsequently, when he was assailed on the subject, he contented himself with defending what he had previously written, but still without any open acknowledgment of his infidelity. Yet no one had ever doubted, or can doubt, that Gibbon was an unbeliever ; because he wrote about Christianity exactly as an unbeliever, and as no sincere believer could write. Even so it is to be presumed that Locke was a Unitarian ; because he always wrote about the Christian religion exactly as a Unitarian, and as no sincere

Trinitarian could write. I feel thoroughly persuaded, that this presumptive evidence of the heterodoxy of our illustrious countryman cannot be resisted by any unprejudiced mind.

Lastly, I contend that in the case of Locke, as in that of Milton, whatever doubts were once entertained on the subject of his Unitarianism, must have been completely removed from every impartial mind by his posthumous publications. In the interesting account of our great philosopher by Lord King, containing numerous extracts from his journals and common-place books, there are several papers on religious topics which appear to me to set the question finally at rest. I cannot, in this place, enter into any particular review of those papers; but I refer you to them with perfect confidence, that after reading them attentively, you will be as fully convinced as I am, that Locke was no believer in those strange, mysterious dogmas, which the majority of the christian church, for so many centuries, have substituted for the simple and glorious truth of the divine unity.

Concerning Newton we have the same kind of presumptive evidence to produce; confirmed however, in this instance, by the positive and credible testimony of his most intimate friends. As in the case of Locke, so it is remarkable that Newton, in all his writings on religion and the scriptures, has never once expressed his belief in the Trinity, or in the personal deity of Jesus Christ. This surely affords strong grounds for supposing that he had no faith in those doctrines. Having urged this line of argument at some length already, in speaking of Locke, I shall not here go over it again. But I must be allowed to mention, that there is a parti-

cular presumption of Newton's heterodoxy on these articles, arising from the circumstance to which I have before directed your attention ; namely, that he instituted a most careful inquiry, and wrote a very elaborate treatise, in order to prove the corruption of two of the strongest texts commonly employed to support the Trinitarian system. Is it likely he would have engaged in such a laborious research from mere curiosity, or critical taste ? Is it likely he would have taken such pains for such an object, if he had not felt interested in setting aside those texts, as false testimonies to a false doctrine ? Is it probable, when his labors terminated, (according to his own judgment at least,) in the utter destruction of these two favorite props of reputed orthodoxy, that he would have concluded his treatise without some expression of his belief, that the doctrines in question might nevertheless be defended by other texts, —if he had entertained any such belief ? Could any honest and serious Trinitarian have done less ? Yet he has not one syllable to this effect. The inference is too clear to be resisted ; he rejoiced in the issue of his inquiries; because he looked on the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation of God as Athanasian corruptions of the pure gospel of Christ.

Again, in the course of this treatise, when speaking of the baptismal commission given by Christ to his apostles, and recorded at the close of Matthew's gospel, Newton calls it,—'the place from which THEY TRIED AT FIRST TO DERIVE THE TRINITY.' Could any conscientious Trinitarian believer have written in this manner ? It is incredible ; and I feel a thorough conviction, that these circumstances, in the total absence of

any contrary proof, ought alone to be considered decisive of the Unitarianism of this great philosopher.

But, as I have already remarked, we have the express testimony of some of his most intimate friends to the same purpose. Mr Hopton Haynes, and the celebrated William Whiston, were both long and closely connected with Newton ; the former as his fellow-servant in the King's Mint, and the other as his deputy and successor in the Mathematical Chair at Cambridge. They were both men of distinguished learning and probity, zealously devoted to religious studies. They were themelves both Unitarians, frank and open adversaries of the orthodox system ; and the former especially was the author of one of the most judicious and valuable books that has ever appeared on this controversy. There cannot be a doubt that they had both frequently conversed with Newton on religious subjects. Now, we have their testimony, that our great philosopher agreed with them, in utterly rejecting the popular doctrines, — believing in the strict unity, and sole unrivalled deity, of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. I have never yet seen anything calculated, in the least degree, to throw discredit on this testimony. It is fully equal to that upon which we receive many highly important facts, in history and biography, which are in themselves not unreasonable or improbable.*

* The testimony of Mr Haynes has been conveyed to us by a third person. It is to be found in a work entitled, ' A Cordial for Low Spirits, being a collection of curious tracts. London, 1763.' *Preface*, p. xviii. The author of this preface was the Rev. Richard Baron, of Blackheath, a General Baptist Minister ; and, it is believed, a man of unimpeachable character. He says in the place above referred to ;—' Hopton Haynes, Esq. was author of several writ-

Such, then, is the evidence on which we rest the truth of our assertion, that in regard to their particular views of christian doctrine, Milton, Locke, and New-

ings well known to the curious; he served many years in the Mint Office, under Sir Isaac Newton, and at the time of his death, had a place in the Exchequer. (I think he died in the year 1749.) He was the most zealous Unitarian I ever knew; and in a conversation with him on that subject, he told me that Sir Isaac Newton did not believe our Lord's pre-existence, being a Socinian, as we call it, in that article. Sir Isaac Newton predicted the restoration of primitive truth, in these memorable words to Mr Haynes, — The time will come, when the doctrine of the incarnation as commonly received, shall be exploded as an absurdity equal to transubstantiation!'

The testimony of Whiston we have directly from himself. It is to be found in his work entitled, 'A Collection of Authentic Records belonging to the Old and New Testament, translated into English by William Whiston, M. A., sometime Professor of the Mathematics in the University of Cambridge, London, 1728.' Vol. 2, p. 1077. The article is on Sir Isaac Newton's Chronology, and the passage is as follows;—'In particular, Sir Isaac Newton was one who had thoroughly examined the state of the church in its most critical juncture, the fourth century. He had early and thoroughly discovered that the old Christian faith, concerning the Trinity in particular, was then changed; that what has been long called Arianism, is no other than old uncorrupt Christianity; and that Athanasius was the grand and the very wicked instrument of that change. This was occasionally known to those few who were intimate with him all along; from whom, notwithstanding his prodigiously fearful, cautious, and suspicious temper, he could not always conceal so important a discovery. Nor need I now crave the reader's belief of my testimony in this case. Sir Isaac Newton has left not a few undeniable testimonials of it behind him; witness his MSS. dissertations upon two of the famous New Testament texts, concerned in that controversy; 1 *Tim.* iii 15, and 1 John, v. 7, both whose present readings he took to be Athanasian interpolations.'

ton, were Unitarians. I trust I have shown to your complete satisfaction, that it is on no very insufficient grounds we venture to rank these men among the great, the wise, the learned and the good, who in all ages of the church, amidst corruption and persecution, have been witnesses to this pure faith *once delivered to the saints*. That we should be desirous by all fair means to establish our fellowship with them in religious belief, cannot reasonably surprise any one. We say indeed of the Unitarian doctrine, as we said before of Christianity itself, that we wish no man to receive it on the mere credit due to other men's opinions. Let every one, mindful of his individual responsibility to God, carefully examine into its truth and accordance with the Holy Scriptures. But here again we say, let every one be assured that, whether he perceive it at present or not, *there must be* some weighty evidence in favor of this doctrine ; otherwise it never could have recommended itself to the calm and patient judgment of such inquirers, — so earnestly intent upon the discovery of the truth, and so highly qualified for the work. As a final test of the truth or falsehood of the Unitarian doctrine, the sanction of these or of any other great men is of no validity ; nor do we wish ever to see it applied in this way. But as a confutation of many absurd reproaches, which ignorant or arrogant men have attempted to cast upon our dearest convictions, the fact of their having been embraced by these great characters is unanswerable. The faith which has been solemnly entertained by such minds *cannot be*, what proud ecclesiastics, in their spite and impotence, have dared to call it, ' a feeble and conceited heresy.' It

has satisfied the understandings, charmed the hearts, and sanctified the lives, of much wiser and better men than many of those who have reviled it.

IV. I regret that the time I have already occupied your attention, will not allow me to dwell, as I could willingly do, on the remaining consideration. It is much too important, however, to be passed over in total silence. I must not neglect to remind you, in conclusion, that these great and renowned men were exemplary *practical* Christians in heart and life. In character and conduct, they were worthy disciples of that heavenly Master, in whose teaching they so much delighted. Though addicted, as we have seen, to habits of free and diligent inquiry, though anxious to attain a pure and scriptural faith, (in which to a great degree they were successful,) yet they did not suppose that a correct *knowledge* of Christianity was all that is required of its professors. They knew it was intended to regulate their dispositions and actions, and to these practical purposes they faithfully applied all its holy principles. Not a serious stain of any kind is to be discovered on their characters! Not a shadow of immorality, of any description, obscures the brightness of their imperishable fame!

Milton's soul was evidently animated with that spirit of strong and fervent piety, which belonged to most of the great actors on the stage of life, in his busy and turbulent times. But I am not aware of any proof, that he was in the smallest measure subject to the folly and fanaticism by which their piety was too often disfigured. He felt the influence of sacred truths work-

ing mightily upon all the faculties, intellectual and moral, of his gigantic mind ; chastening, expanding, and elevating all his private affections ; filling his soul, in her moments of solitude, with all kinds of pure and heavenly meditations ; strengthening his heart to do his duty manfully in the walks of public life, in the glorious conflict for liberty and truth ; guiding him, throughout his years of activity, to deeds of disinterested virtue and heroic patriotism ; and finally consoling him in his last desolate days, when he was left to mourn apart, in affliction, poverty and blindness.

For our incomparable Locke, his whole life appears to have been one uninterrupted course of innocence, piety and goodness. The purity of all his dispositions and habits, and his filial tenderness and fidelity, in his youth ; his high-minded contempt of worldly gains and honors, which courted his acceptance, in his manhood ; his unwearied, amiable endeavors, to serve his friends and fellow creatures on all occasions ; the cheerful piety with which he endured his complicated pains and sufferings for so many years ; and at last, the calm and dignified spirit of resignation in which he met approaching death ; — all together afford a beautiful and almost unparalleled example of christian excellence.

In what relates to Newton, although he apparently had to struggle with some serious natural infirmities of temper, yet he seems, by the christian simplicity and integrity of his character, ever to have maintained a place in the esteem and love of all that knew him well. There are few passages of personal history more interesting and affecting, than the account of the tempora-

ry disagreement, and permanent and cordial reconciliation, between Locke and Newton.* Therein, we may witness a moral scene highly worthy of our contemplation. The greatest philosopher of that or of almost any age, conscious that he has erred, feeling that by hasty and groundless suspicions he has wronged his virtuous friend, bows himself down like a very child, and in sorrow and shame entreats forgiveness. And that mistrusted friend, himself one of the noblest intellectual benefactors of his race, instantly replies to the entreaty with a humility, a frankness and a grace, which makes his character, on other accounts so great, appear withal exceeding amiable. It is a portion of their history that affords us, incidentally, a bright glimpse of the genuine, the unostentatious christian virtues, which belonged to these truly venerable sages. In understanding they were perfect men: in malice they were like babes.

In these respects, then, the example of Milton, Locke, and Newton, is one of very precious value. How happy would it have been for the cause of religion, how happy for the world, if men distinguished by their *mental superiority*, had always been careful to exhibit similar examples of *moral worth!* How beautiful the character in which these perfections unite! How well the presence of each becomes the other! How glorious to see a life of innocence and piety recommended to the notice and the veneration of millions, by being associated with exalted powers of intellect, with vast

* See the Letters between them in Lord King's Life of Locke. Vol. I. pp. 417—419.

acquirements in knowledge, or with the achievement of great and famous deeds! Finally, however, in regard to these, their *moral* qualities, even the humblest of men may aspire to emulate the great ones of the earth. We may aim to accomplish this, if we can accomplish nothing more. Let us resolve to do so; and it will not be altogether in vain that we have been engaged in considering the religious opinions and example of these illustrious characters. May the one true God whom we worship, through Jesus Christ our Lord, crown our meditations and resolves with his blessing.

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EXPLANATION

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EXPLANATION OF ISAIAH, IX. 6.

ISAIAH, IX, 6.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

THIS passage has been commonly understood as predicting the birth of Jesus Christ. It is true that some critics of considerable eminence, among whom is the celebrated Grotius, have considered the passage as relating, in its primary sense, to Hezekiah, the son of the impious king Ahaz, in whose reign it was pronounced. But it is not my purpose to discuss the question of the proper application of the passage. Without deciding for or against the common application of it, I shall endeavor to explain it in reference to Jesus, and to fix your thoughts on those points of his character and office, which the several expressions in it may suggest.

The expressions in the passage are evidently borrowed from a style of royalty. They indicate the birth

of a prince, the heir of a throne. Applied to Jesus they represent him as a king, and the establishment of his religion as the setting up of a kingdom. Unto us a child is born, unto us a son, i. e. a king's son, is given, and the government shall rest upon his shoulder; i. e. he shall bear the burden of government, as a load is usually borne upon the shoulder. Or the government may be said to be upon his shoulder, because the purple robe, or the regal sceptre, the emblems of government, usually rested upon the shoulder. It is manifest that our Saviour is called a king only in a figurative sense. For how little did his character, or condition, resemble those of any sovereign, that ever occupied a throne. In respect to the character of the governor, the nature of the government, the manner in which it was established and is continued, and the benefits resulting to the governed, how different is the kingdom of Jesus from the kingdoms of this world!

What are the benefits to be derived from the best of human governments compared with that rest to the soul, which is found by those, who take upon themselves the yoke of the prince of life? What is security to natural life, compared with the everlasting happiness of that part of ourselves, which shall never see death? What is the liberty that can be guarantied by the most perfect civil government, compared with the glorious liberty from degrading habits, from tyrannical passions, from oppressive anxieties and tormenting fears, which belongs to the voluntary followers of the prince of peace? And what are the rewards, which a human government can confer, compared with a victory over death and the grave, and an immortality, incorruptible,

undefiled, and that never fades away? Well did the Saviour exclaim, *My kingdom is not of this world.*

Another lesson you may draw from the expression, *The government shall be upon his shoulder:* viz. the iniquity of the usurpation of the government of the church by sinful mortals. God has made Jesus head over all things to the church. Let, then, the government rest upon his shoulder, where the pen of the prophet declared it should rest. Let not the professed subjects of Jesus presume to dictate what men shall believe, or what they shall reject, in order to enjoy the privileges of his spiritual kingdom. The head of the church is abundantly able to protect all its interests, and to bear all the burdens, and discharge all the duties, of its government. Let not then vain man imagine defects in the government of Jesus. Let him not act on the supposition that he has intrusted his subjects with too much freedom. Let him not dare to abridge the liberty, wherewith Christ hath made us free. Let him not dare to stand before that door, which Jesus hath left open, saying, *Behold I have set before you an open door*, with a creed in one hand and an anathema in the other, and exclude the guests, whom Jesus invites to enter.

My friends, there is reason enough for these cautions. It is a melancholy, an awful truth, that even in this commonwealth, the holy ordinance of the supper, the memorial of him, who came to give us perfect freedom, is made an instrument of spiritual slavery. It is a solemn truth, that many of the churches around us are nothing less than prisons of the human soul; yea, the very graves of free inquiry. This is the case in all those churches, where the rejection of an opinion once

professed is treated as a crime, and stigmatised as the breach of a solemn covenant, and the violation of an oath, subjecting the offender to censure and exclusion.

The prophet goes on to declare that his name shall be called *wonderful*. By an idiom of the Hebrew language, the word *name*, it may be observed, is here redundant. His *name* shall be called, is the same as, *he* shall be called. So to call upon the name of the Lord is the same as to call upon the Lord. It is evident that the prophet did not intend to predict the proper name of the Saviour, but only those qualities and circumstances of his character, which should merit and receive the splendid epithets, contained in the passage.

He shall be called *wonderful*. The propriety of this epithet is seen at once by every one, who remembers anything of the birth, the youth, the spirit and character, the good deeds and wise instructions, the dignity and the humiliation, the life and the death of Jesus. He was wonderful in being welcomed into the world by the homage of sages, and the songs of angels; in his increase in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man; in his conversation with the wise men of his nation, when only twelve years old; in receiving the holy spirit without measure, and in being addressed by the voice from heaven, 'This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased;' wonderful in all the words, which he spake, and all the acts, which he performed; in his superiority to his nation, and his age; in the vast extent of his conceptions, the sublimity of his doctrines, and the unrivalled excellence of his precepts; in piety to God, and benevolence to man; and above all, in the generous sacrifice of his life for the salvation of the

world ; in the miraculous phenomena that accompanied his death ; in his speedy return from the mansions of the dead, and in his glorious ascension to the right hand of God. Well then might the pen of inspiration predict that he would be called *wonderful.*

The next epithet applied to him is that of *counsellor.* And the propriety of this epithet will appear evident, when it is considered what was the source of his wisdom, and what the character of his instructions. He is a counsellor, because the spirit of the Lord rested upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. He was in the bosom of the Father ; he drank in wisdom from the pure fountain of eternal truth ; in him were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. What question is there worthy of an immortal being to ask, which the great counsellor will not answer? He may not, indeed, throw light upon your schemes for laying up the treasures which the moth and rust may corrupt ; but he will tell you how to use them, so that when they fail, ye shall be received into everlasting habitations. He may not gratify your curiosity in questions of doubtful disputation, or communicate that knowledge of the material world, which the faithful exertion of your own faculties will enable you to acquire. But ask of him the character of the great Being, who is the arbiter of your condition in this world and the future ; ask of him the origin, the nature, the duty and the destination of man ; ask of him the source, and the design of the blessings you receive, and of the calamities, that befal you ; ask him how a sinner can be reconciled to God ; and gain the favor

of Him, whose hand moves the springs of your happiness or misery ; ask him, what will become of you, when your bodies shall be mingled with dust, and scattered to the winds of Heaven ? In regard to all these questions the great counsellor will give you more satisfaction than all the mighty masters of philosophy that preceded, yea, more than all that have followed him.

To this great counsellor, my friends, apply for instruction. Like Mary, sit at his feet ; listen to all the words which proceed from his mouth ; follow him with his disciples from place to place ; witness all his miracles ; observe all his conduct ; treasure up all his declarations ; and in life and in death, in time and in eternity, believe me, you will find him a counsellor, whom you will never repent to have consulted, and whom you will never repent to have followed.

The passage we are considering, according to the common translation, goes on to declare that the child that was to be born should be called *the mighty God*. Upon this expression I remark first, that for the particle *the* before the terms *mighty God* and *everlasting Father*, there is no foundation in the original. And I am happy to observe it expelled from the passage, in a recent translation of it in the most learned orthodox journal[1] in this country. Leaving out the particle *the*, the passage will read, He shall be called *mighty God*. If this translation be correct, the meaning is, that Jesus, in his regal character, as the Messiah, the son of God, and head of the church, should possess such mighty power and such superior wisdom, that he should be called, as it

[1] The Biblical Repository, printed at Andover, Numb. for July 1831, p. 522.

were, a God upon earth. It was not uncommon, as is well known, in ancient times, to give the name of God to persons distinguished by the dignity of their stations, or the importance of their office, or the excellence of their character. Thus Moses, on account of the miracles he was instrumental in performing, is said to have been a God to Pharaoh. And if Moses might be called *God*, without danger of being identified with the Creator of the Universe, a greater than Moses might be called *mighty God* by a similar use of language. So kings and princes are called Gods, as 'I have said ye are Gods, and all of you children of the most high.'* So our Saviour observes, that 'He called them gods, to whom the word of God came.' †

That the epithet, *mighty God*, was used to denote qualities of character, or dignity of station, and not to designate or name the person, to which it is applied, is also evident from the following consideration. All the other epithets, applied to the child in this verse, confessedly denote qualities of character, or circumstances of condition. The terms *wonderful*, *counsellor*, *everlasting father*, *prince of peace*, are all used to indicate *what sort* of a person the child should be, not *who* he should be. And it is extremely improbable that *in the midst* of four epithets, all descriptive of qualities of character, a fifth should be inserted, giving him a proper name, or declaring *who* he should be. This would be a violation of propriety of language, not to be expected from Isaiah. Jesus, then, according to the Jewish use of language, might be called mighty God on account of his miracu-

* Ps. lxxxii. 6. † John x. 35.

lous powers and marvellous wisdom, and glorious exaltation, in perfect consistency with the truth that 'he could do nothing of himself,' that all power 'was given' him, and that all his fulness was derived from the good pleasure of his Father. Thus the prophet is not the author of a proposition so contradictory as that a child to be born, and destined to sit on the throne of David, should be the eternal Creator, the Governor of the Universe. It is only a strange inattention to the use of language among the Hebrews that will allow such a proposition to be drawn from the passage.*

I have thus far considered the expression *mighty God* to be a correct translation of the original, and endeavored to explain it in consistency with the derived and dependent nature of Jesus. It is a fact, however, that the Hebrew word rendered God in this verse, and which

* The term *Immanuel*,† *God-with-us*, I regard as an expression somewhat different from that under consideration. The emphatic word in that symbolical name appears to me to be the particle *with*; which has the same meaning as in Ps. xlvi. 11. The Lord of hosts is *with us*, the God of Jacob *is our refuge*. The true meaning of this symbolical name would appear more clearly, if it were translated, *God-will-help-us*. This name was undoubtedly given to a child, that was to be a proof to Ahaz, king of Judah, of the speedy deliverance of his kingdom from the invasion of the combined forces of the kings of Israel and Syria. Of course it was applied originally to a child to be born in the time of the prophet Isaiah. For, to use the language of professor Stuart, of Andover, 'How could the birth of Jesus, which happened 742 years afterwards, be a sign to Ahaz, that *within three years* his kingdom was to be freed from his enemies? Such a child, it would seem, was born at that period; for in ch. viii. 8, 10, he is twice referred to, as if then present, or at least, then living.'—Stuart's Comment. on Hebrews, vol. II. p. 335.

† Isaiah vii. 14.

is often correctly rendered so in other parts of the scriptures, has another meaning, and one more appropriate in this verse than that of the common version. It denotes *a man of strength, a hero*, or *potentate*. The very same word is applied to Nebuchadnezzar in Ezek. xxxi. 11. where he is styled the *mighty one* of the nations. Here the original word might be rendered *God* of the nations, with as much propriety, so far as the word itself is concerned, as in the verse under consideration. In Ezek. xxxii. 21, the same word, in the plural, is translated *strong*; 'the *strong* amongst the mighty.' Here, too, the translation might be, 'the *gods* among the mighty.' The same word is rendered *the mighty*, in Job, xli. 25. And it appears to me that a similar translation is more proper here, where the expressions are evidently borrowed from the language of royalty, and the Messiah is supposed to be represented in his kingly character. In this way Martin Luther, who cannot be suspected of any sectarian bias, translated the word in his German version of the bible. In place of the terms *mighty God*, he has *mighty, hero*. In the same way the first living Hebrew scholar in the world, the German Gesenius, renders the word. This expression, therefore, applied to the Messiah, declares that he should be called *mighty hero*, or *mighty potentate*, in reference to his exaltation to be a prince and a saviour, anointed by God with the oil of gladness above his fellows, and whom every tongue must confess to be Lord, *to the glory of God the Father*. At the same time, if any prefer the common translation, *mighty God*, the expression may be explained, in the manner above-mentioned, in perfect consistency with the derived power and entire depen-

dence of Jesus upon 'his Father and our Father, his God and our God.'

The next epithet, applied in the verse to the child that was to be born, is that of *everlasting father;* by which is meant, that he would be the perpetual father, benefactor, or guardian* of his people. In a similar, though a less important sense, a good prince, or ruler, who has conferred great benefits on the land of his birth, is said to have been the Father of his country. The term everlasting has no reference to the past, but only to the future. It means ever-enduring, or perpetual, as in the phrases everlasting happiness, everlasting mercy. Jesus, then, according to the promise, will be the perpetual father of his people. He will watch over the interests of the church, as a father over the interests of his children. He will strengthen their weakness; he will console their sorrows; he will animate their fainting spirits; and he will ever make intercession for them before the throne of God. This prophecy that he will be the everlasting, or perpetual, father of his people, appears to mean nearly the same thing with the promise, 'Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world;' i. e. I will always aid you, and interpose my good offices in your behalf. Whether Jesus is personally employed on earth as the invisible agent of the Most High for the benefit of the church, or only by means of the instructions, hopes and consolations of his religion, and as their intercessor in heaven, is a question, upon which there may be different opinions.

* In this explanation of the expression *everlasting father*, I am glad to have the support of professor Stuart of Andover. See Biblical Repository for October, 1831, p. 746.

In either case, we may regard him with interest and affection, as the everlasting or perpetual friend of his people.

The last epithet bestowed upon Jesus in the passage, is that of *prince of peace*. And a prince of peace he was in three different senses. First, he came to make us at peace with God; to reconcile us to his Father: to purify us from those sins that separated us from our God. Thus it is said by the Apostle, 'We have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

Again, he is the prince of peace, as he came to promote peace between man and man; to subdue those passions, from whence come wars and fightings; and to establish in the souls of men those feelings of justice, kindness, forgiveness, and humility, which are calculated to maintain perpetual peace. Only let nations and individuals be deeply imbued with the principles of the prince of peace, and the sword will be beaten into the ploughshare, and the spear into the pruning hook, and men will learn war no more.

Lastly, he is the prince of peace, as he is the author of inward peace, or tranquillity of heart. It is only by coming to him, and imbibing his piety, his benevolence, his meekness and lowliness of heart, that we can find rest unto our souls. Thus alone can we find peace; the peace which the world can neither give nor take away. It is pride, selfishness, irreligion, envy, malice, and revenge, that are the sources of most of the misery of the human heart. When these demons have been expelled from the soul through the aid of christian precepts, hopes, and promises, and when faith, hope and

charity, have taken their place, then at length we shall be at peace with God, at peace with man, and at peace with our own souls. This glorious effect Jesus came to produce; and he has produced it in the hearts of thousands. Well then may he be styled the prince of peace.

Such is the character of him upon whose shoulders the government of the church is laid. He is *wonderful* in all his attributes. He is a *counsellor* who resolves all our doubts, and who alone can show us the way to eternal happiness; he is a *mighty potentate*, who is endowed with all the powers necessary for the establishment and security of his kingdom; he is the *everlasting*, or *perpetual, father* of those, who put themselves under his government; and he is the *prince of peace*, to all his obedient followers.

What reason have we, as Christians, to rejoice that such a child was born, that such a son was given; one that can dissipate our darkness, and illumine our minds; can calm the conscience and make us at peace with God, with man, and with our own souls; can free us from the misery of tyrannical passions; can encourage with paternal tenderness our feeble steps; can deliver us from the sting of death, and the terrors of the grave, and discover to us immortal happiness. With what alacrity should we embrace the privilege of being subjects of his kingdom! With what fidelity should we follow him as the captain of our salvation! With what ardent zeal should we heed his admonitions; listen to his instructions; mark his example, and obey his laws: and with what earnest gratitude should we thank God, who laid help upon one that was so mighty to save

With what joy should we regard the fulfilment of this prophecy,

> For unto us a child is born,
> Unto us a son is given;
> And the government shall be upon his shoulder;
> And he shall be called wonderful,
> Counsellor, mighty potentate,
> Everlasting father, prince of peace.

EXPLANATION OF JOHN, I, 1.

JOHN, 1, 1.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

IN the following explanation, I shall maintain, that the *word* of God is no more a distinct person from God, than the word of a man is a distinct person from the man.

Jesus spake as never man spake, and performed what never man performed. His discourses and his deeds, were super-human. The evangelist John, in the beginning of his gospel, accounts for the supernatural character of the discourses and actions of Jesus. This he does by declaring, that the *word* i. e. *the energy* or *the wisdom and power* of God, was united with Jesus, or dwelt in him.

But how is it, that the term *word* denotes the energy, or the wisdom and power, of God? Perhaps we may answer this question without going beyond the sacred volume for help.

In the first chapter of Genesis, the creation, in its

successive stages, is said to have been the result of *the word*, or *command*, of God. 'God *said*, Let there be light, and there was light, &c.' So in the Book of Psalms we read, 'He *spake*, and it was done; he *commanded*, and it stood fast.'* And again, 'By the *word* of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the hosts of them by the breath of his mouth.'† So in regard to other operations of God, we read, 'He *spake* and the locusts came, &c;' and again, 'He sendeth forth his *commandment* upon the earth; his *word* runneth very swiftly.'‡ This then was the ancient mode, in which the operations of the Deity in the world were represented; viz. as proceeding from a word or command But when the Jews began to affix an exact meaning to expressions of Scripture, they could not help perceiving, that it was not by a literal, audible word, or command, that the divine operations were performed. They could not help perceiving, that the ascription of a real voice, or tongue, or lips to the Deity, was inconsistent with his character, as an immaterial spirit. How natural, then, was it for them to give a new, and more spiritual meaning to the term *word?* How natural that they should understand by the term, that *energy* or *those attributes*, by which a word or command of God would be executed. I believe that the fact corresponds to the presumption here stated; and that, in the time of the Evangelist John, the term *loges*, or *word*, was used by many to denote that energy, or those attributes of God, which are manifested in his operations in the world, i. e *the power* and *wisdom* of God.

*Ps. xxxiii. 9. †Ps. xxxiii. 6. ‡Ps. cxlvii. 15.

In the last verse quoted from the Psalms, where 'the *word* of God' is said to 'run very swiftly,' we find the term so far personified, as to have life, and action, attributed to it In some of the Apocryphal writings we may observe the same thing in a still higher degree. Thus, speaking of the destruction of the Egyptians, the writer says, 'Thine almighty *word* leapt down from heaven, from his royal throne, a fierce warrior, into the midst of a land of destruction.'* In the Book of Wisdom, ix, 1, the term is used as parallel with wisdom, i. e. as having a similar signification with it. This writer uses the language, 'God of my fathers and Lord of mercy, who hast made all things with thy *word*, and ordained man through thy *wisdom*.'

Thus the term *word* came to have a new and more spiritual meaning than originally belonged to it, and was used to denote the *energy* or the *power and wisdom* of God, manifested in the creation and instruction of the world, which in popular language used to be represented as the result of his word or command. The Evangelist uses the term *word* as denoting neither an articulate sound, nor yet as a real person, or intelligent agent, but a portion of the divine attributes personified. In the same way the term *wisdom* is personified in the eighth chapter of the book of Proverbs, and indeed the term *word* itself in Heb. iv. 12, &c, where it is said to be 'quick and powerful, sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.' It is impor-

* Wisdom of Sol. xviii, 15.

tant to keep in mind that the *word* is represented as a figurative, though not a real, person ; otherwise this explanation may appear to be harsh. But any one, who attends to the above-mentioned personification of wisdom, and to the personification of sin, death, and the grave, in the writings of St Paul and in the Apocalypse, may find this explanation attended with at least as little difficulty as any other. In order, then, to convey to a certain class of his readers the idea of a spiritual teacher endowed with divine wisdom and power, St John declares that *the word*, in the sense above ascribed to it, was, in the Messiah, manifested to the world in a human form.

'*In the beginning*,' i. e. before the foundation of the world, '*was the word*,' i. e. the divine power and wisdom; '*and the word was with God*,' i. e. was always in his presence, ready to execute his purposes, '*and the word was God*,' i. e. had no existence independent of, and separate from him, but was an essential part of the divine nature.

'*By it*,' i. e. by this word, or divine power and wisdom, '*were all things made*,' v. 3; and by the same was an influence exerted to enlighten and save the world, which influence the world long resisted, v. 4, 5, &c. At length this word, or divine power and wisdom, was manifest to the world in a human form, and enabled the Messiah to perform those miracles and teach those doctrines which could have proceeded only from the power and wisdom of God.

The advantage of this explanation is, that it supposes the term God to be used in the same sense in both cases, where it occurs in the first verse. This is not

the case on the Trinitarian hypothesis, or any other, which makes the term *word* denote a real person. For, in this case, the verse would read, 'In the beginning was the son, and the son was with the Father and Spirit, and the son was the Father and Spirit.' It would imply, that a person might be said to be with another, and yet be that other person with whom he was just said to be. Whereas, if we understand the *word* to denote the divine energy, or the divine power and wisdom, by which his operations in the world are performed, nothing can be more proper than to assert that wisdom and strength are with God* and that they are God, i. e. have no existence separate from him, but are a part of the divine nature.

In regard to the expression, 'The word became flesh,' it may be remarked that the Trinitarian cannot understand it more literally than it is understood in the above explanation. For he will not pretend that the eternal Spirit was actually changed into flesh and blood. He will say that the Supreme Being was united with Jesus without undergoing any change. So I maintain that *the word*, in the sense above explained, was united with Jesus, and enabled him to act, and to teach, as he could not have done, had not the spirit of God been poured upon him without measure.

It may also be remarked that, according to the above explanation, *the word*, and *the spirit*, of God, are used by the evangelist as nearly equivalent. For both these expressions denote the divine power and wisdom, to which Jesus referred his works and doctrines.† So in the old Testament the creation is sometimes ascribed to the word,

* See Job, xii, 13. † See John, iii, 34, 35.

and sometimes to the spirit of God.* From the circumstance that the Evangelist uses the term *word* only once, and the term *spirit* frequently, to denote the source of the supernatural character of Jesus, we may infer, that the latter term was most common, and most familiar to him, as having been used by Jesus; and that he used the term *word*, in the beginning of the gospel, in reference to some question that had arisen concerning it; or as likely to be better understood than the term *spirit* by a portion of those, whom he addressed.

In conclusion, I remark that, while I am free to confess, that I have yet some doubts remaining in regard to the exact explanation of this, as of other passages of Scripture, yet I have a deep conviction, that the Trinitarian exposition of it is attended with far greater difficulties than any other, even if we look not beyond the passage itself. But when I take into view the doctrine, that shines on every page of the gospel of St John, concerning the derived and dependent powers of Jesus, the Trinitarian hypothesis appears to me to be at an immeasurable distance from the truth.

It is, indeed, said, by Trinitarians, that those passages, which represent Jesus as dependent upon and inferior to, the Father, are to be understood of his *human nature.* When we urge the passage, *The Father is greater than I*,† or that of another Evangelist, *Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels that are in heaven, neither the son, but the Father*,‡ they reply, that it is only *as man* that he says, that the Father is greater than he, and that it is only as man, that he knew not the day and the hour, &c.

* See Job, xxvi, 13. † John xix. 28. ‡ Mark xiii. 32.

But, as has been observed by a distinguished writer, 'in order to apply this answer to the passages, which represent Jesus Christ as inferior to his Father, it ought to appear very clearly from scripture, that there are two natures in Christ, one divine, and the other human. But this is what does not appear from the sacred writings. There is not a single passage, which obliges us to regard Jesus Christ as the supreme God. There is nothing, therefore, which authorises us to make this distinction.'

'One cannot apply this distinction to the passages of scripture in question, without doing violence to them, without attributing to them a mode of speaking, unknown to all languages, and contrary to all the rules of language. In effect, by these rules, one may indeed attribute to a whole, what agrees to some one of its parts; but one cannot deny of a whole, what agrees to one of the parts, which compose it. For example, I can say of a man, that he thinks, and that he is extended; because there is in him something that thinks, and that is extended; but I cannot say of a man, he does not think, he is not extended, under pretence that there is in him something that does not think, and something that is not extended. Thus, supposing that Jesus Christ be the Supreme God, he cannot say, that he knows not the day of judgment, as on this supposition he knows it in an infallible manner by his divinity. He cannot say in a general manner, and without any limitation, that this day is unknown to him, without violating the truth. The language, which they have made Jesus Christ employ, in supposing that he had present to his mind this imaginary distinction, resembles that, which I might

hold, if, when interrogated by a judge concerning facts which are very well known to me, I should reply, that they were unknown to me, under pretence that my *body* had no knowledge of them. It is as if, when one asked me if I had seen such a person, I should answer, no; because when I saw him, I had one of my eyes shut, and did not see him with that eye. It is as if, when one should desire me to write upon some subject, I should reply, that I was not able to write, because *my mind* could not hold a pen. There is nobody, who does not see, how absurd such a mode of speaking would be.

'If we examine the passages, to which the orthodox apply this distinction, we shall find that it cannot take place. In effect, Jesus Christ is most frequently represented here as the Son of God, i. e., according to the system of the Orthodox, as God. One cannot therefore say, that it is as man that Jesus Christ speaks on these occasions; for example, in the passage we have already quoted, Jesus Christ says, 'as for that day, and that hour, no man knoweth it, not the angels who are in heaven, nor even the son but the father.' *No man knows it*, neither the angels, nor even the son, that is, not Christ himself, considered as exalted above the angels, considered as the son of God; as God, according to that system; one cannot therefore say, that it was as man that Jesus Christ speaks in this passage. He excludes even this, when he says, no *man*. In effect, when the disciples addressed this request to Jesus Christ, 'Tell us when these things shall come to pass,' they did not merely ask him what he might know of them, by lights natural to humanity; they addressed themselves to him, as the son of God; they wished to enjoy

a share of that knowledge, which Jesus might possess in this regard, in consequence of his intimate union with the Deity. It follows, therefore, that Jesus Christ must be absolutely ignorant of the time of the last judgment to answer as he did; and that there is not in Jesus Christ those two natures, which serve for the basis of that distinction they have systematically framed; and that this distinction must be vain and chimerical.'

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PRESUMPTIVE

ARGUMENTS

IN

FAVOR OF UNITARIANISM.

BY M. L. HURLBUT.

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IN FAVOR OF

UNITARIANISM.

The object of the ensuing essay, is by a comparison of Unitarianism with the popular system of orthodoxy, in some of its leading doctrines, to point out the *probabilities* in its favor. The probabilities, we mean, antecedent to any direct proofs derived from the authority of scripture. These probabilities we denominate 'presumptive arguments.' We regard these as highly important, and worthy of deeper attention than they seem to have generally received. In our view they are decisive of the question at issue. For, unless we are altogether deceived, they throw on our opponents a burden of proof which they cannot sustain. They will hardly deny, we think, that our scheme of interpretation, as applied to the New Testament, is at least a *plausible one*. They will not deny that there is a show of reason in the solutions we give of the debatable points between us; or that the *general tenor* of this book *may* be regarded as consistent with our views of divine truth. Thus much, we believe, they must, in common fairness, admit. Now this admission, as we hope to show, will

be sufficient for us, and fatal to them. For we expect to make it appear, that, if the scriptures *can* be *even plausibly* interpreted, consistently with our system of doctrines, then these doctrines must be true. This is what we propose ; and, in so far as we are successful in accomplishing our purpose, we think we shall render a service to the cause of truth. Something of this sort seems to us to be required in order to present the question in a proper point of view. We wish to give our doctrines a fair chance ; to secure for them an impartial trial. We wish that the testimony of scripture may have an opportunity of being applied according to the real merits of the case. But at present it is not so. Inquirers come to the examination of this subject with crude, or false conceptions of the question at issue, the points on which it turns, and the nature and degree of proof which the subject requires. Many seem to have taken the impression, that Unitarianism is something strange and startling, every step of which is to be clearly made out by invincible and direct proofs ; and fortified by a chain of demonstrations wrought out from scripture authority, link by link. This view of the subject is certainly not a correct one ; and we hope to make it appear that it is not. Yet it is a very common one, and the result of very obvious causes. Orthodoxy has so long had possession of the public mind, that its roots have spread far, and struck deep. It has infused its spirit into the whole mass of our literature. It has tinged the very atmosphere through which the light of heaven visits our eyes. It has tainted the very springs and vehicles of thought. It is no wonder, that those who come to the study of this question in the scriptures,

with minds preoccupied by artificial formulas, inculcated from infancy into the warm and yielding texture of the growing intellect; with prejudices trained and fostered till they have overgrown the whole mind, should find in the scriptures the very things they come to look for. It were strange indeed if they should fail to do so. Nor is this all. Fear has been enlisted on the side of error, and in aid of prejudice; fear, at once the offspring and the parent of ignorance and imbecility of mind. Men have been taught to believe that it is unsafe to trust their own reason and judgment; that it is hazardous to inquire into the grounds of their faith; and fatal to relinquish certain articles of the popular creed. It is time men were disabused of this delusion, which, if universal, would endue error, once prevalent, with immortality. Let men once be convinced that they may examine the claims of Unitarianism without danger to their virtue, their peace, or their hopes, and they will not, we are persuaded, be long in embracing it. We hope we shall be able to show them, in the course of the following remarks, that they may do this; and that in so doing, they will only follow the guidance of nature, reason, and common sense. We shall be satisfied if our remarks prove not altogether unavailing to weaken the hold of prejudice; to unbind the spell of systematic error; to disenchant and set free the enthralled reason; and thus to enable men fairly and justly to estimate the testimony of divine revelation.

It may be proper to state that, by the terms, 'Orthodoxy, Popular Creed,' &c, we mean the system of Calvinism: and that our remarks are intended to apply to

the various denominations of the day, only in proportion as they agree with this system. Of this system we shall speak freely and without disguise. We trust we may do this without offence; for we speak of the *system only*. With this we have no measures to keep. We regard it as being, in its essential principles and tendency, opposite to the true spirit of the gospel. And we believe, that if the influence of its peculiar doctrines by themselves, should be fully imbibed, and permitted to operate uncontrolled, it would turn the fruits of the gospel into wormwood. Happily, this is not the case. No system of faith, in ordinary circumstances, exerts other than a modified influence on its votaries; an influence checked and controlled by innumerable causes. In the present case, the doctrines of Calvinism are combined with the great system of moral and spiritual truths, common to all forms of Christianity. It is to these it owes the good which subsists — and subsists so largely too, in many cases — under its sway. Its mischiefs only are its own. Many minds, by a happy moral idiosyncrasy, spontaneously reject the poisonous properties of their faith, and imbibe and assimilate only the kindly influences of principles, associated with it. In others, they subsist as barren speculations, hardly exerting any influence on character or practice. Hence the instances — and they are many — of eminent virtue and piety to be found among Christians of this denomination, and which we value not the less, because united with opinions which we think both false and pernicious. Their piety and virtue spring from the soil of our common Christianity. They have grown up in spite of their peculiar system; and would, we doubt not, wear a fresher

bloom, and bring forth richer fruits, if these peculiarities were done away.

Is it necessary to say more? Men of liberal minds will readily believe, that, in condemning a system of doctrines, we cannot intend to impeach the characters, or wound the feelings of those who embrace it. Those of a different temper would neither be soothed by concessions, nor satisfied by disclaimers.

One word with regard to the manner in which religious controversy ought to be conducted. Its single object should be, to elicit and establish truth. Keeping this object steadily in view, we think it best, like the Apostle, to use 'great plainness of speech.' We would call things at once by their right names. We would express our honest convictions, and assert our christian rights fully and fearlessly. Some advocates of Unitarianism seem to us to have adopted a style of defence somewhat too *deprecatory*. We have sometimes thought that they seemed to be oppressed by the consciousness of being in the minority. We cannot sympathise with such a feeling. Were we compelled to regard ourselves as standing alone — single in the midst of the earth, we should regret the circumstance principally on the account of others. We should not feel the less satisfied with our system, or the less confident of its ultimate triumph. We meet our opponents on the broad level of our inherent rights, as men, and as Christians; rights which they have not given, nor can take away. What is it to us, if in a spirit of petulant and overweening vanity, they choose to deny our title to the christian name? Their folly and arrogance is their own affair, not ours.

The first presumption we shall consider in favor of

Unitarianism is, that it harmonizes with the voice of external nature. Its doctrines coincide with the conclusions, to which an intelligent and impartial observer of the works of God would naturally come concerning the Divine character. It is certain that nature and revelation, receiving as they have done their impress from the same spirit, cannot speak a different language, though we, indeed, may err in our interpretation both of the one and the other. To him who hath ears to hear, there is an intelligible language uttered forth by the heavens and the earth. To him, who hath eyes to see, the universe is the book of God, inscribed all over with the living lineaments of his perfections; though its still small voice is often unheard — its magnificent symbols ill understood. It is certain, however, that the universe teaches nothing of a divided, or compound existence in its great first cause. Everything points distinctly to a single designing intelligence, and directing will; and this the more clearly in proportion to the accuracy and extent of our investigations. If there be any one doctrine, which nature and reason demonstrate more clearly than all others; any doctrine which must be true, or doubt and scepticism hold universal reign, and men have no longer a foundation for either faith or reasoning; it is this of the simple unity of God. Whether we reason from cause to effect, or from effect to cause; commence the argument wherever we may, this is its inevitable result. It speaks out to us from the still depths of our own reflections — it is pencilled with sun-beams on the pages of God's works. Certainly, then, we may be justified in saying, that revelation *cannot* contain a doctrine really inconsistent with this fundamental truth.

Thus far our opponents will go with us ; but they will not admit that the doctrine of the Trinity is, in reality, inconsistent with this. Of this hereafter. They will hardly deny, however, that there is — at first view, at least — an *apparent* inconsistency between them. Now, just so far as this appearance goes, it brings the doctrine within the scope of our remarks, and constitutes a presumption against it. Anything like this doctrine under any modification which has ever been given to it, would not and ought not to be *expected* in divine revelation, by the student of nature. It could not but strike him as a difficulty, an incumbrance, an obstacle in his way altogether unlooked for ; an inconsistency which would shock and embarrass him. We say not that it is such an inconsistency as cannot be reconciled — such a difficulty as cannot be explained away. But we do say that any dogma concerning the divine nature even apparently incompatible with the idea of his simple and absolute unity, is such a one as we ought not to expect to find in the gospel ; and, therefore, if it be really found there, requires to be proved by testimony of the clearest and most decisive character. It must not be left to be made out by remote and laborious inferences, however ingenious ; for the inherent and previous probabilities against it are too strong to be set aside by evidence of this nature. There must be nothing equivocal or obscure in the propositions which declare it ; nothing ambiguous in the medium through which it is conveyed. It must bear on its front the legible impress, 'Thus saith the Lord,' or a reasonable man cannot be expected to believe it. Do we require too much ? We certainly think we do not. We certainly think we do

not overstate the presumption, which reason and nature afford against the truth of this doctrine. We think our opponents must be compelled to meet us on the ground we have marked out.

Another presumption in favor of Unitarianism is, that its representations of the moral character of God accord with the dictates of nature and reason. To an attentive and impartial observer of the works of God, the proofs of his goodness are clear and convincing. The evidence of intelligence and design, is not more manifest than that this design is benevolent. On a superficial view, indeed, we meet with facts that may seem inconsistent with this position, and with principles of an apparently opposite tendency. But as we proceed in our inquiries, new light breaks in upon us at every step. Our difficulties are found to have been the difficulties of ignorance alone. The obscure, and as we thought it, adverse fact, is seen to be an important link in the bright chain of order and beauty that binds the universe. Indeed, the more thoroughly we examine the laws of the material creation, and trace the operations of providence, the deeper and surer must our conviction be, that the whole plan and purpose of the Divinity is essentially benignant — that he has not given existence to the minutest particle of organized matter, but in order to render it conducive to the happiness of something that is capable of enjoyment.

To the same conclusion our abstract reasoning in regard to the divine nature would conduct us. If there be a first cause of all things, he must be infinite, independent, uncontrollable. No other being can possibly interfere with his purposes, or affect his felicity. And if

such a being we cannot even conceive of any other motive or action, than the desire of communicating happiness. So far as the deductions of our own reason are to be trusted — we are safe in averring, that a being of infinite power must likewise be infinitely good. Malignity of purpose, injustice, cruelty, and revenge, necessarily imply a consciousness of weakness. He who can do everything, can have no inducement to do wrong ; can be under no necessity, as dependent beings often are, of passing by the best, in order to fix on the practicable. Reason, then, assures us that God must be good ; and everything we see in the heavens, and on the earth, proclaims that he *is* so.

Let it be remembered, too, that when we speak of the goodness of God, we do not mean some ill defined, mutable quality, to be explained according to the exigencies of the argument, and capable of being moulded to suit the demands of a theory, which teaches the very opposite. We mean precisely the same quality in kind, though not in degree, as when we speak of human goodness. Doubtless our Creator intended we should form some idea of his moral perfections. But this were impossible, unless the terms which express them are to be understood in the same sense as when applied to the moral qualities of man.

We say, then, that reason and nature teach us, that God is good, in the obvious and popular sense of the term ; good in such a sense that he cannot perform an action, the final purpose of which is the infliction of suffering ; good in such a sense that he cannot do that which, on a full view of the case, would, in a human agent, be denominated cruel or unjust ; good in such a

sense, that he will not punish an innocent being for the crimes which another has committed ; good, in fine, in such a sense, that he cannot punish a frail creature, for not performing what the very law of his being had disqualified him to perform. Suppose we admit, that these views *may* be, in some measure, incorrect ; that a stronger and a brighter light shed from heaven on the mental eye may enable us to see further into the deep mysteries of the Divine character ; and that these dictates of reason may be set aside by the decisions of superior authority. Let us suppose that such evidence *may* be presented in the gospel as shall constrain us to admit, that the goodness of God is something diverse, in kind as well as degree, from the same quality in man ; and that he may, without impeachment of his character, perform what to us seems palpable cruelty and injustice. But is this *probable* ? Is there not a strong presumption beforehand that no doctrines inconsistent with this view of the divine goodness will be found there ? Ought we to anticipate a revelation from heaven, which should unteach us all we had learned in the school of nature ; unsettle the fixed principles of the intellect ; falsify all the conclusions of reason, our primary guide amid the dark and intricate windings of our earthly course, and thus extinguish the light which God himself had enkindled in our minds ? Yet such, if the views of our opponents be correct, is the character and tendency of the revelation God has sent us by his Son. We cannot, possibly, regard it in any other light. It teaches, according to them, that the goodness of God is partial, limited to a small number, who have been selected by an arbitrary decree, to be the depositaries of his favor, while the

rest have been left to inevitable ruin, under the withering curse of his almighty wrath. It teaches that the mass of mankind have been brought into being for no other purpose than to be the victims of remediless ruin, the objects of vindictive and everlasting punishment. It teaches, consistently with this purpose, that men come from their Creator's hands with characters totally depraved; without the power to form one good desire, or cherish one virtuous sentiment; as wholly unable to obey the commands of God — (call this imbecility physical or moral, or by whatever name we may, it alters not the fact) — as to pluck the sun from his sphere; and yet liable for every the smallest transgression to an infinite punishment. And above all it teaches, that such as escape this fearful condemnation are indebted, not to the native goodness — the spontaneous compassion of their Maker, and Judge, but to a full and entire satisfaction made to his justice, all stern and inflexible as they represent it, by another, on whom the penalty of their sins has been rigorously inflicted. Now, it does appear to us, that, if this system of doctrines be true, all our notions of the goodness and paternal kindness of God, gathered from nature, reason, and the spontaneous dictates of our own feelings, must be false. We see not how they can be reconciled. If this system be true, it seems to us little better than mockery, to expatiate to the sinner on the compassion of the divine mind; or to endeavor to excite him to penitence by the hope of forgiveness. We see not that there is any place for forgiveness in the whole scheme of God's dispensations. It appears to us, that not a single sin ever has been, or ever can be par-

doned ; that repentance and contrition can avail nothing. If this system be correct, it is impossible to regard our world in the same light as before. Under its influence a dark shade overspreads the universe ; and the broad and fair aspect of God's works, glowing with light, and beauty, and joy, we must have to consider an illusion. The earth is transformed into a prison-house, where vengeance trains its victims for immolation ; and all the grander and more striking movements of the material elements become the agents of avenging justice. Storms and tempests, lightning and earthquakes, are to be regarded as scourges of God, and tokens of his indignation. Now, a sound philosophy certainly teaches no such doctrine. It sees in these terrible agencies of nature, as in the sunshine, and the shower, the operations of universal beneficence. It regards the immediate evils they produce as remedial only, and essentially conducive to ultimate good. And we certainly think that a strong presumption in favor of our views of the gospel, arises from the harmony that exists between them and these conclusions of reason — these, we had almost said, *instinctive* apprehensions of divine goodness—these dictates of enlightened philosophy. In the system of our opponents, on the other hand, we think we discern many lingering traces of the false philosophy and gloomy superstition of heathen times, when the imagination wandered in the dark, haunted by terrors of its own creation. Be this as it may, it will hardly be denied that there is a repugnancy between these peculiar dogmas of the popular creed, and the plain suggestions of reason and common sense. Let us admit, that it does not, however, follow, that these dogmas must *necessarily*

be false. Let us admit that all improbable, as we conceive they are ; shocking as they are to every feeling of our hearts ; contradicted, as we think, by the experience of every day in the business and intercourse of life; still they *may* be true ; that our previous reasonings, sound as they certainly appear to us, may be set aside; our apprehensions of God's character, simple and natural as we consider them, *may* require to be rectified. Let us suppose we may have pushed our conclusions too far ; that our inferences may have been too hasty, or too broad ; that the light of our own minds, clear as it seems to us, may have misled us. But, surely, we have a right to expect that all these strong probabilities in our favor should be *clearly* and *explicitly* shown to be fallacious. We have a right to require, that the antagonist doctrines be stated, in the revelation which we admit to be from God, in plain, unequivocal terms ; terms of no ambiguous import ; terms which cannot possibly admit of a fair, plausible, or adequate interpretation on any other supposition than that of the truth of the doctrines in question. We aver that as long as there is room for reasonable doubt, with regard to the import of scripture on these points, they are not to be admitted. The proof must be such as to be absolutely irresistible to every unprejudiced mind. There must not be left a loop on which to hang a doubt. On these terms we are willing to join issue with our opponents. Let them show us that all, or any, of the popular dogmas, mentioned above, or any others peculiar to their system, is supported by such evidence as we have required, and which we are quite sure we have a right to demand, and we will embrace it with all its consequences. If we

are unable, as we think we must be, to reconcile it with our general views of God, and nature, we will still believe that, though apparently, they are not in reality inconsistent; and we will endeavor humbly to wait God's own time to illuminate what is dark.

The sum of the argument is this. Nature and reason, experience and observation, we maintain, conspire in inculcating the great truth that God is good, essentially and invariably good; that goodness alone is the prime motive of all his actions, the leading and predominant quality, so to speak, in his character. So that his sovereignty and justice, in all their displays, and operations, are to be interpreted, always, in accordance with this; to be regarded as subservient to its purposes; as existing and exercised only to promote its designs. We are quite sure that, so far as the light of nature and reason goes, these are the views it presents. Now, it appears to us, that with these views the system of our opponents is altogether incompatible. That there is an *apparent* inconsistency, we suppose will not be disputed. But between these views and our own system of religious doctrine there is no repugnancy; they are perfectly accordant. This, then, we say, furnishes a strong presumption in favor of our system, and against theirs. This apparent inconsistency *may* be cleared up, and reconciled, though we see not how; but as long as it remains, the presumption we speak of, will press with all its weight on our opponents. With this presumption against them, these doctrines ought not to be admitted unless they are *incontrovertibly* proved to be true by the supreme authority of God's word. It will not be enough to show that certain passages of scripture *seem* to teach

them. It will not be enough to show that certain passages of scripture seem hardly capable of any other interpretation. It will not be enough to show that some passages, if they mean not this, must to us mean absolutely nothing. It will not be enough even to show that these doctrines are consistent with the general tenor of the gospel. Our opponents must do more than this; they must show, not that these doctrines may be true consistently with the analogy of faith, but that they absolutely *must* be true; not that the gospel may be interpreted consistently with their admission, but that it *can* be interpreted no otherwise. Let them show us all this — and when we see that these doctrines make a necessary part of the christian scheme; that they are so wrought into the very texture of the gospel, that they must be received, or the gospel itself be rejected; we shall readily embrace them. In the mean time, we say, that he who embraces them, on proofs less cogent than we have stated, does it at his own peril — at his own *peril;* for, if false, they must needs be injurious. Whether fatally so, it is not for us to determine.

Another probability in favor of our system, and against that of our opponents, arises, as we think, from the different views they present of the nature and condition of man. This has been touched upon already, but requires to be more fully developed.

In the absence of express testimony from God, we can gather his purposes with regard to man, the end and object of his creation, only from *appearances* — from an attentive consideration of his powers and capacities,

his propensities, habititudes, and affections; and the adaptation of all these to the circumstances and condition in which he is placed. Now, these appearances, we contend, all lead to the conclusion, that the present world is a place of trial — an initiatory state of existence — a nursery where the human being is to be reared and trained for heaven; and that such was its destination in the original purpose of the divine mind. For such a state man, as it seems to us, is adapted — wisely, exactly, beautifully adapted. There is a perfect correspondency and congruity between his nature and condition; between his faculties and the business assigned him; between his constitution and the circumstances in which he is placed. Probation necessarily implies imperfection — not superinduced, but original. It implies liability to fail; and wilful failure necessarily involves guilt. In a being, whose character is to be formed by discipline, sin may be said to be a *necessary contingency*. There can be no virtue without it. In this view, 'God,' in the language of Solomon, 'hath made man *right*.' He is neither more inclined to virtue, nor to vice, than he ought to be.

With these views of the nature and condition of man, Unitarianism perfectly harmonizes. We contend that such are the views directly presented, or implied, and assumed as correct, throughout the gospel. We do not, indeed, regard him as possessed of the capacity, knowledge and virtue of an angel. If he were so, he would be an anomaly among the works of God; a being wholly out of his sphere. Such endowments would unfit him for his present state; they would be inconsistent with the very purposes of his existence here. We regard

him as a frail and erring creature, with appetites that require to be restrained, and passions easily roused to violence and misrule. Yet neither his appetites, nor his passions are originally wrong. On the contrary, there is not one of them, which speaks not of a wise and benevolent design. They were intended to be the ministers of happiness and virtue. Capable of perversion they doubtless are ; and when made the ministers of vice and misery, we feel and know, that they are perverted ; and that their original purpose is contravened. But, while we admit that man is frail, and easily biased from the course of virtue, we maintain, that he has within him a capacity for high and holy things ; that he bears upon him still the living impress of the divinity ; that he often feels and manifests the kindling aspirations and soarings of a heaven-born spirit — and we aver that on this basis rests the whole moral machinery of the gospel.

The system of our opponents with regard to the original constitution of man, his present condition, and that of the world he inhabits, is at variance with ours in every respect. According to them, he was originally formed with a perfect character, holy and fair in the moral image of his Creator ; and placed in a world fair and perfect as himself. From this state of things, disease, decay and dissolution were of course excluded. Everything that lived was clothed with immortality. But sin found its way into this fair scene, and its beauty passed away like a dream. The constitution at once of man, and of the world around him, underwent a radical change. Death, inflicted on man as the punishment of his transgression, spread its ravages, we are not informed why,

over the whole unoffending creation. The moral powers of man were totally perverted; his very reason deserted its post, and went over to the side of his corrupt passions, and the thoughts and purposes of his heart became evil, wholly evil, and that continually; and the whole race, from that day to this, have inherited this radical and entire depravity; this inability to think a good thought, or form a virtuous wish; this total alienation from God, and hatred and opposition to his character. According to them, this world and all that it inherits, is a blot on the fair page of God's works; an utter perversion of his original design. Man, seen in the light of this system, assumes the aspect of an incarnate demon — utterly hateful and abominable, without one redeeming trait in his character — the scorn, the outcast, and the opprobrium of the universe. For such a being the calvinistic scheme is, for aught we know, good enough. It may be the only one fit for him. For why urge moral motives to a being whose moral powers are extinct? For ourselves, we should as soon think of preaching to the occupants of the church-yard, as to those of the church — we should as soon think of going on a mission to tigers and hyænas, as to men, if this doctrine were correct. But is it correct? Are these representations of our common nature agreeable to the dictates of reason and experience; of common sense and common feeling? Does any man of common honesty, be his theory what it may, practise on the belief of their correctness in the intercourse of life? Is he not compelled to assume their falsehood at every step? Can any parent that has a human heart, look on the infant that smiles in his face, and really believe that it is a fit object of divine indignation, and liable to everlasting

punishment? We appeal to every man of sensibility who has been led to adopt these views of human nature, whether he has not, at times, been sensible of this strong repugnancy between his theory and all the better feelings of his heart? We are much mistaken if we have not witnessed the operations of this struggle in many; and we have wondered that it did not occur to them, that, very possibly, the language of nature might be true, and that of their creed false. To us there is a voice speaking out from the whole analogy of nature, and the workings of every unprejudiced mind, that proclaims the doctrine a libel at once upon man and his Maker. There is no occasion, let it be added, to resort to this theory in order to account for the prevalence of crime and misery in the world, color the portrait of society as darkly as they may; and we think they are apt for obvious reasons, greatly to overcharge the picture. Our own system furnishes an adequate solution. But, if this doctrine be true, we see not how they can account fairly for the existence of a single virtue or good quality, on earth. We say, in fine, that the presumption against this doctrine, arising from all these considerations, appears to us to be *infinite*. We can hardly express it too strongly. Taking these impressions with him to the perusal of the scriptures, who, we ask, would find this doctrine satisfactorily taught there?

Again; we think it an advantage in our system, and affording a probability in its favor, that there is nothing *exclusive* in its spirit; that it permits and requires us to exercise charity towards Christians of every name; to regard all as brethren who bear the name of Christ, however widely their speculations may differ from ours.

We hold the right of opinion to be sacred, beyond the control or cognizance of mortals ; an affair between the individual and his God. He alone knows how much of speculative truth is essential to a holy life ; and how far error is consistent with safety. And to him we leave it ; we dare not undertake to exercise his prerogative. In forming our estimate of the characters of men, we look to their conduct, not to their creeds. We are willing to recognise as Christians all who call themselves by this name ; we reject none who do not themselves reject the gospel. Their sincerity, their correctness, is their own affair ; we have nothing to do with it. This, we think, is the true protestant ground. Let us not, however, be misunderstood, or misrepresented, as we fear we have often been. It has been made a topic of reproach against Unitarianism, that it is a cold and uninteresting system ; that it renders its votaries indifferent alike to truth and error. The reproach is altogether unmerited. We are *not* indifferent to the truth. There is nothing in our system that tends to such a result. We believe that all truth is valuable, and all error injurious, just so far, and no farther than they affect the character, and influence the practice, of their respective votaries. Truth we regard only as the handmaid of virtue ; her light we value only in so far as it illuminates the path of christian duty. Doubtless, we admit that he is more likely to arrive speedily and securely at the goal, who pursues the straight course, than he who wanders from it. In one word, we regard opinions as valuable or otherwise, in proportion to their practical tendency, rather than to their speculative correctness. Our opponents, on the contrary, seem to us

to attribute a mysterious and magical effect to the reception of certain abstract doctrines. They perpetually inculcate this as a necessary condition of salvation. They make it, with perfect consistency, a test of the christian character — of the spiritual state of men ; and refuse to regard as brethren, or admit to their fellowship, those who cannot abide this test. It is the very spirit, and letter too, of their system, that their peculiar views of revelation are fundamentally important ; that they are absolutely essential to the formation of a holy character. These peculiar views, then, must be embraced by all who hope to come within the pale of their communion. No rectitude of life, no meekness and gentleness of temper, no apparent piety and devotion, can compensate for a failure here. No matter how pure or lofty the character of the individual. If his creed be deficient in the canonical number of propositions, no other proof is requisite to justify them in marking him with the stamp of reprobation. We are not speaking of the temper or conduct of individuals among the Orthodox, more, or fewer in number. Our objection goes deeper — it lies against the very spirit of their scheme. We object against it that it is of its very essence to inculcate a habit of mind at once exclusive and arrogant. The votaries of this system, if they act consistently, must exclude from their charity all those who differ from them in their peculiar belief. The more conscientious, the more bigoted. The more they think they love God, the less will they love their fellow-men. Their system *teaches* them to regard those, who reject it, as the enemies of God : and why, or how, should they love those whom God abhors ?

Who will say that there is nothing unkindly in the tendency of such a system as this? Who will say there is nothing to shock the better feelings of our nature? Who will say that there is nothing apparently incompatible with the spirit and purpose of that religion which was announced by the proclamation of 'peace on earth, and good will to man?'

We consider it, therefore, we repeat, as a strong presumption in favor of Unitarianism, that it is chargeable with no such pernicious tendencies. It does not teach us to consider any peculiar set of opinions as absolutely essential to entitle us to the favor of our Maker and Judge; and yet, within these limits, it leaves us ample scope for a rational and pious preference of our own views. And we *do* prefer them. We think them immeasurably superior to those of our opponents. We are undoubtingly assured that they are more kindly in their operation on the human character; that they cherish more generous feelings; that they raise to a higher importance in the scale both of duty and of happiness, the charities and courtesies of domestic and social life; and that they are less likely to give birth to sanctimonious selfishness, and spiritual pride. We believe that in proportion as we have imbibed the spirit of our system, we are happier than the disciples of the vulgar faith; and we think these considerations justify us in feeling a warm interest in the prevalence of this system. They justify, too, our efforts to extend its triumphs, so far as these efforts are not inconsistent with the rights and feelings of others. But beyond this limit they will not justify us in going. If we transcend this, it is the fault of our temper, not of our opinions. These will not

justify us in regarding our neighbors, because they believe more or less than ourselves, with scorn and aversion, as reprobates, and outcasts from the favor of heaven. They will not justify us in outraging their feelings, and invading their rights by denunciations and anathemas ; in impairing their usefulness, and blasting their fair prospects, by directing upon them 'the evil eye' of public mistrust and suspicion. They will not justify us in intruding upon the sanctity of the domestic hearth, and sowing discord among the charities of home, by alarming the fears of the young, the ignorant, and the timid ; in usurping a fraudulent control over their inexperienced minds, and thus withdrawing their confidence from their natural guides and guardians. These things, our sense of the value of our religious opinions will not warrant us in doing. On the contrary, we declare, for ourselves, that rather than secure their prevalence by such means, we would willingly see the last vestige of them disappear from the face of the earth. Our opponents may denominate this indifference if they please. To us it appears equally the dictate of natural justice, and christian forbearance ; one of the fairest traits in our system, and among the strongest presumptions in its favor.

Again, we regard it as a presumption in favor of Unitarianism, that it permits, and inculcates the exercise of our reasoning powers on a subject of all others the most worthy to employ them. It addresses itself to our reason ; it appeals continually to its decisions ; and it regards these decisions, when formed on proper evidence, as final and conclusive. Whatever doctrines reason, 'in

the sober use of its legitimate, peculiar powers,' will not approve, we unhesitatingly reject. They can make no part of our creed. To a blind, implicit faith, we assign no value whatever. It is well if it be not positively pernicious. We fully believe that our views in this respect, coincide with those of the gospel. We are sure they have a strong probability, *a priori* in their favor. We do not find that God has ever enjoined on men the duty of believing without evidence. We do not find that he has ever addressed them otherwise than as rational beings, capable of discerning between truth and falsehood, and expected to do so on their own responsibility. 'We speak,' says St Paul, 'as to discreet men; judge ye what we say.' Revelation, as we think, came not to supersede reason in its office, or to set aside its deductions; but to enlighten its course, to expand its views, to enlarge its field of action, to dispel the earth-born mists that obscured its vision, to give it broader and more solid premises, on which to build its conclusions, and to imp its wings for a higher flight. It never calls for the subjection of reason — the 'prostration' of the understanding, to its dictates. On the contrary, it is itself subjected to the decision of reason; and must abide the test. It must be received or rejected according to the dictates of our sober judgment on the evidence presented. And as with the evidence on which it rests, so with the doctrines it contains. These too, are subjected to the test of reason. We believe them just in so far as we understand them; and no farther. The provinces of faith and reason are not distinct, the one beginning where the other ends. They cover the same ground. And we see not how it is possible it should be

otherwise. It seems to us a mere identical proposition to state that what is not understood, cannot be believed. In this case no object is presented to the mind for it to receive or reject. What is not understood is to me no revelation. If a man say that he believes what he does not pretend either to explain or comprehend, he deceives himself. His faith is merely verbal and illusory. Doubtless there may be many truths both in nature and in scripture, of which we are ignorant. But to us, so long as we remain ignorant of them, they are nothing — they are to us as though they did not exist. We pretend not to comprehend the nature and perfections of the Divine Being, for example; but in so far as they are displayed, they are perfectly plain and intelligible — 'he that runs may read them.' And what is not displayed is no concern of ours. My eye cannot penetrate the deep infinitude of the space that surrounds me; but within the verge of my own horizon I can see clearly, and move freely: with what is beyond I have at present no concern. Let it not be said that we exalt reason at the expense of revelation. We do but assign to each its appropriate sphere. Reason, we admit, was weak and inefficient by itself. And why? It wanted authority to still the clamor of the passions, that disturbed its operations. It wanted facts to render its conclusions certain. Above all, it wanted sanctions to bind them on the conscience. All this revelation has supplied; and thus completed the system of God's dispensations to man. Do we depreciate its value? Is there anything in this representation of a tendency to lower our sense of gratitude to God 'for his unspeakable gift?' On the contrary, we value it the more highly because it is, as

we think, adapted to the high origin, and immortal destination of our common nature. And we think that our opponents, in vilifying and degrading human reason; in representing it as corrupt, and debased; and cautioning men continually against trusting to its guidance, in making it the test of a docile and humble spirit, to be willing to embrace doctrines, from which reason recoils; do justice neither to reason, nor to scripture; neither to man, nor his Maker. We think too, they betray the weakness of their own cause; that they disparage reason because its decisons are not in their favor; and thus create a strong presumption against the correctness of their views in the mind of every unprejudiced inquirer. These views, surely, are such as no reasonable man would expect beforehand to meet with in a revelation from that being, who kindled the light of intelligence in the human mind. They are not, therefore, to be admitted upon slight evidence. Probability is against them. They may not be assumed — taken, as it were for granted — drawn in by remote and subtle implication, provided there be nothing clearly and explicitly disapproving them. The true state of the question is far otherwise. Unitarianism, in this point, as in others, builds on the common sense and common apprehensions of mankind; it appeals to experience. In its estimate of the powers and duties of human reason it falls in with the concurrent judgment of all men of all ages, in regard to every other subject. If then, religion alone is to be an exception; if here alone men are to desert the universal guide; if on this subject alone propositions are to be believed — not understood, — and faith is to be accounted valuable in proportion as it triumphs over reason;

certainly it is incumbent on our opponents clearly to make out their case. We have a right to expect that they give us plenary proofs, and incontrovertible authority. If there be this strange repugnancy between natural reason and the truth of God, it is their business to make it appear. We maintain that they are perfectly accordant. It is for them to show that they are not so.

We shall mention at present but one presumption more in favor of our system. It is that which arises from the simplicity of the faith which it requires as essential to the christian character. The gospel was designed for universal reception. It is designated by our Saviour himself as 'glad tidings to the poor.' It is addressed to the unlearned, to men pressed by the labors, and distracted by the cares of a busy and toilsome life; who have neither leisure nor ability for mental cultivation, nor capacity to comprehend the deep abstractions, and remote and subtle conclusions of metaphysical reasoning. Now, so far as faith is essential to the salvation of persons of this character, what ought we to expect would be the subjects of his faith? What kind of propositions would be likely to compose the fundamentals of their creed? Would it be agreeable to our natural notions of the wisdom and goodness of God, that he should suspend the eternal felicity of beings such as these, on their belief of dogmas, which the subtlest disputants have never been able satisfactorily to solve? Would the benevolent Parent of all deal thus with his children?

We appeal to any candid and unprejudiced mind, whether the presumption be not altogether against such a course? and whether the doctrines essential to the

salvation of the mass of mankind ought not to be expected to be few, simple, and easy to be understood? To us it appears that the great fundamental doctrines of any religious system must be plain, or they cannot be true. In a system of faith designed for all, and made necessary to salvation, simplicity seems to us an *essential* quality. Any complicated and abstruse doctrines *cannot* make a part of it. Let us apply these remarks to the state of the case between us and our opponents.

Unitarianism teaches, that, for those who rest their hopes on Christianity, there is one fundamental doctrine, and one only. The essentials of our creed may be stated in three words: 'Jesus is the Christ; a messenger of truth and mercy from God.' This simple proposition admitted, with unwavering assent into the mind, the whole business of *christian* faith, merely and distinctively, is discharged. If this single doctrine will not enlighten the conscience, and purify the heart, and regulate the life; if it will not tranquillize the spirit, and enkindle devotion, and awaken hope, and wing the aspirations of the soul to God; if it will not communicate strength to suffer, and a will to serve, then nothing will. We cannot believe, that by making our faith more complex we should increase its practical power, even in minds capable of wider and more elaborate views. The more simple, as it appears to us, the more efficacious. And in minds of a simpler cast, we should weaken, if not destroy its force. Faith must be an active principle, or it can be of no avail; and a principle can be active in so far only as it is clearly apprehended, and cordially embraced. Abstruse and multifarious propositions may gain a *formal* assent from those, who are taught to con-

sider such assent as necessary to their eternal welfare; but it is obvious that this assent, in most cases, is merely verbal; that it has no firm hold on the intellect; and that there is great danger that it will accustom its subjects to substitute the hallucinations of the fancy for the sober dictates of the understanding. It is the excellence of our creed, that it is plain, and easy of apprehension; capable of satisfactory proof alike to the humblest and most cultivated minds; and that it contains within it the living principle and germ of the whole system of practical Christianity. Whoever admits this, is bound, by an authority, which he cannot think of questioning, to the performance of all the moral duties, and the cultivation of all the holy affections of the gospel.

Our opponents, on the other hand, present us with a string of propositions, drawn out with logical formality, and embracing doctrines, which, if true, are confessedly anything but plain. We have already stated the *improbability* of these doctrines in general. We now add, that admiting them to be true, it is extremely improbable that they should be essential to salvation. They are too recondite in their character, too far beyond the grasp of common apprehension; the proofs on which they rest are too metaphysical, they have an air altogether too scholastic, to be the basis of a system, which is to *form* the characters, and regulate the lives, of the weak, the ignorant, and the busy.

To instance in the doctrine of the Trinity alone. It is alleged, that without this, true piety cannot exist, and that those who reject it are unworthy of the christian name. Yet what is this doctrine, when fairly and soberly

examined? What but a tissue of absurdities; of conflicting and incompatible ideas? It states that there are three persons, infinite and equal in power and perfection, yet but one God. Is there anything like this in the gospel? Is it possible to state this proposition, or one equivalent, in the language 'which the holy ghost teacheth?' Yet, if there be such a doctrine, is it not confessedly a doctrine of revelation alone — one of which nature and reason give no intimation? and is it probable that revelation would make fundamental to the hope of man, a doctrine, which cannot even be stated in the language of revelation? a doctrine, which, whenever and wherever it is found, is necessarily announced in 'the words which man's wisdom,' or his folly, 'teacheth' — rough and bristling all over with uncouth terms, drawn from the school and the cloister? But further, we ask, is it possible to state this proposition at all in terms of a definite and settled import, so that the one part shall not be repugnant to the other? Is it possible, we ask seriously, to assign to the doctrine any intelligible meaning whatever, without running into simple Unitarianism on the one hand, or absolute Tritheism on the other? If the term person has any meaning at all, it means a distinct, intelligent agent; and if three distinct, intelligent agents, each with the attribute of infinity, be not three Gods, then language is no longer to be trusted as a vehicle of thought. If the term means something less than this, we ask what that *something* is? He who calls on me to adopt an article of faith, at the fearful stake of my eternal salvation, is bound, in common fairness, to tell me clearly what such article imports. He may not shroud himself in obscure phrases, and talk of mystery,

when I ask for truth. We do not call on our opponents to explain all the bearings and relations of the doctrine; we ask them, simply and solely, to tell us what the doctrine is; what is the purport of the terms in which they have *chosen* — for revelation has not done it for them — to announce it? This they have not done; and this, we verily believe, they cannot do. One of their champions, when hard pushed, takes shelter under the cover of the term '*distinctions*.' The 'persons' of the godhead are so many 'distinctions;' whether distinctions without difference, we are not informed. We can see no advantage in this term, except that it is one step farther advanced in abstractness and obscurity than the other. Another tells us that the three persons are 'three *somewhats*.' Now we ask the advocates of this doctrine to lay their hands on their hearts, and tell us, whether this be not solemn trifling. The hungry soul asks his spiritual guide for bread, and he gives him a — 'somewhat!' The anxious inquirer wishes to ascertain what are the conditions on which the benefits of the gospel salvation are to be obtained. He is told that the sole condition is faith. He asks, what are the objects of this saving faith? and is answered, that the prime article is, that there are 'three distinctions,' or 'three somewhats,' in the divine nature. No doubt he will be highly edified by this disclosure. No doubt this faith must be of powerful efficacy to restrain his passions, to exalt and purify his affections, to kindle his devotions, and expand his charity. With good reason may he look down from his eminence on his uninitiated brethren, with pity for their blindness, and thank God that he is not as other men But allowing the importance of this doc-

trine, who are they that adequately believe it? and in what does the advantage or sufficiency of this faith consist? Is it in the repetition of a form of words, without regard to the import attached to them? Do they 'hold the faith,' who verge, with Sherlock, on Tritheism — so closely verge, that the wit of man cannot draw the line between them? or they, who fall, with South, in every thing but words, into the doctrine of the simple unity — regarding the persons of the Deity as so many relations only between him and his creature? If our opponents will not grant the sufficiency of a faith *merely verbal*, and yet allow the orthodoxy of the last mentioned class, it will require but a slight extension of their system to admit us also, whose faith is not *substantially* different; whose language is more honest; and who have, at least, the advantage of knowing, and being able to state, precisely what our meaning is.

Our opponents disclaim any construction of this doctrine inconsistent with the unity of God. This disclaimer, we doubt not, is honestly made. But do they not deceive themselves? Do they not practise an illusion on their own minds? We ask them to look into the deep recesses of their hearts, and see whether they do not find there the idea of three distinct objects of worship, covered only with a thin veil of words without any definite meaning. We are persuaded that, if they find not these ideas, they will find nothing definite whatever — that their Trinitarianism will amount to this, if fearlessly examined, or amount to nothing. We say that it is impossible, consistently with the laws that govern the human intellect, that it should be otherwise. The doctrine of the Trinity either teaches the existence of *three*

Gods, or it teaches nothing distinct from Unitarianism. We say not, that it does not employ very different terms from such as we can admit; but we do say that these terms, imposing as they appear, are absolutely without meaning, unless they mean more than those who employ them will admit. It is impossible we aver, for the wit of man to comprehend the distinction between the terms *person* and *being*, as applied to the Deity; or even to conceive, for one moment, that such a distinction *can exist*. The term person, therefore, in this connection, consistently with the disclaimer mentioned above, is altogether void of import. It conveys no more idea to the mind than if it were in an unknown tongue. We repeat, therefore, that in so far as any one is a Trinitarian, in any intelligible sense, just so far is he a worshipper of more Gods than one. We speak advisedly, and according to the dictates of our sober judgment, when we say, that between this point and Unitarianism, there is not a foot of ground, on which to stand; not a foot, from which they may not be driven by their own admissions. The doctrine is either false, or nugatory. In the one case, it must be pernicious; in the other, useless, at least. These positions, we are aware, may appear startling to many. It seems to have been generally admitted, by Unitarians, that the doctrine, though admitted not to teach more Gods than one, was still entitled to consideration, still capable of sustaining an argument as to its truth or falsehood. We think this concession unnecessary, or *premature* at least. We think it will be time enough to make it, when the advocates of the doctrine shall have informed us what they mean by it — or when at least, they shall have shown us, that, not mean-

ing this, it can have any other possible meaning whatever. This they have never done, and, we believe, they never can do it. Our statements will be denied, probably denounced; but they will not be fairly met, and refuted. Let any two of its champions agree in a definition of this doctrine assigning a precise and intelligible meaning to the terms in which it is stated; nay, let any one of them fix on a definition by which he will himself abide, and we will readily retract our error. At least, we shall admit that a tangible topic is presented for discussion, capable of being either proved, or disproved, adopted or rejected. This, we think, is not at present, the true state of the case. We can see nothing in the dogma, short of tritheism, on which either faith can rest, or with which an antagonist can grapple. Be this, however, as it may. It is hardly to our immediate purpose to discuss the truth, or falsehood of this, or the other articles of the popular creed. We wish only to show, at present, that even if true, they are hardly entitled, as our opponents claim for them, to be regarded as essential to the christian character. And this, we think, with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity, we have satisfactorily established. And, if we mistake not, the same course of reasoning will be found conclusive, so far, at least, as the exigences of our argument require, against the rest. They are not the doctrines which one would expect to find laid down as the necessary basis of a saving faith, and which ought not to be admitted as such without the clearest and most cogent proofs. The simplicity of our creed, on the other hand, we maintain, constitutes a strong probability in its favor. Our limits will not allow us to pursue this course of argument further. Neither,

perhaps, is it necessary. If we have been at all successful in communicating our impression, in illustrating our views, we think we have made it appear, at least, that our scheme of doctrine presents itself with fair and plausible pretensions; that it ought not to be rejected without a hearing. We think we have shown, that it has strong probabilities, and weighty presumptions, in its favor; that nature, experience, reason, and providence, and the whole analogy of God's works, plainly point to such a scheme, as what ought to be *expected* in revelation from Heaven; and as what may, therefore, be assumed, taken for granted, to be true, unless distinctly shown to be false. This, we affirm, is the true state of the controversy between us and our opponents. The burden of proof rests wholly on them. We are not called on to show, by critical investigation, and scriptural authority, that our doctrines are correct. This has indeed been done a thousand times twice told; and will still be repeated. But really such a course appears to us gratuitous. Our opponents are bound to prove, and with the clearest evidence, that our doctrines are not true They are bound to invalidate, by undeniable authority, all the strong probabilities on our side. We are not bound to become the assailants. On the contrary, we have possession of the strong hold — we stand on the vantage ground. We have no fears for the result. We have no apprehensions or misgivings in regard to it. We consider its ultimate triumphs as certain. Not that we anticipate the entire eradication of error, the universal reign of truth on earth. They will doubtless continue, in a greater or less degree, to hold a divided empire in the world, while man continues to be man; and

thus to form a part of our mental and moral discipline in this preparatory state. But we do anticipate the general prevalence of more rational views of God and man, and of their mutual relations, than have hitherto obtained. We anticipate this from our confidence in the divine goodness, and in the progressive nature of the human mind. And this anticipation we would not relinquish, even though our eyes, in surveying the moral horizon, could discern no glimmerings of a brighter morning about to dawn upon the world. But it is not so with us. The day star of hope has already arisen. We are cheered by the signs of the times. The spirit of inquiry is abroad — a spirit free and masterless as the mountain breeze. Its course will not be permanently checked. The reign of mysticism, of spiritual usurpation, and dogmatical imposition, is passing away. Men are beginning to think and examine for themselves, and to make religion, both in theory and practice, a matter of personal concern. The present is, to a remarkable degree, an age of bold yet cautious speculation — cautious, because well informed — for rashness is allied to ignorance. It is an age of practical, business-like, common-sense philosophy. There is a tendency in the public mind to bring everything to the test of rigid scrutiny. Whatever principles in science, politics, morals, or religion, will not bear this test, will be sure to be rejected. The man who perceives not this tendency in the public mind of the present age, is blind; and equally blind is he who sees not its inevitable result.

The popular systems, both of government and reli-

gion, are fast becoming obsolete ; the world has outgrown them ; and they will soon be cast off. Men will have a more rational system, or they will have none. Of the latter, we trust, there is no danger. The present is decidedly, and remarkably, a religious age. We do not believe there has been a time since the introduction of Christianity, when the sense of religious obligation, and the conviction of its essential importance to the well being of man, was so general, and so deep as at present. The reign of scepticism and irreligion has passed away. This spirit has sown its seed, and reaped its harvest — the wind, and the whirlwind. The world is satisfied with the experiment; and will hardly be induced to repeat it. Reason has returned to its natural alliance with piety and devotional feeling: an alliance, which, for the benefit of both parties, we trust will never be dissolved.

On these grounds rests our confidence in the final triumph of rational Christianity. A thick cloud, we are aware, has long rested on the religious world; but we behold the bow of promise spreading its beautiful arch athwart the dark surface, and brightening as it expands. We see the '*lifting*' of the mists, even from those tracts where they have hovered longest and gathered thickest. Bright breezes, we doubt not, will soon spring up, and the dark masses roll away for ever.

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TESTIMONIES

FROM

THE NEIGHBORHOOD

OF THE

ETERNAL WORLD,

ON

ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD.

BY NOAH WORCESTER, D. D.

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THE OCCASION OF THIS TRACT.

THIS Tract was occasioned by the following circumstances. After having spent many months in inquiries relating to the ground of acceptance with God, and the truth of the popular hypothesis that the righteousness of Christ is the only ground of the sinner's justification, I happened to read a little book, entitled 'Incidents in the Life of President Dwight,' which contained the solemn testimony that I have copied in the following pages. I had previously written a series of about twenty numbers, which I intended to prepare for publication. But the testimony of Dr Dwight, in opposition to my views, seemed to demand my attention; and it was given in a form, which afforded an opportunity for what appeared to me a striking contrast between his testimony and that of the Messiah. By exhibiting the contrast, I thought I should have opportunity to make my own views on the subject intelligible to Christians in general, — and this in a form both concise and perspicuous. I therefore resolved to give a summary view of the different opinions on the subject, in the form of a Tract. Dr Dwight was a man of eminence in public estimation, and he was so in mine. Hence there is the greater obligation to try to correct what was erroneous in his writings; and hence, too, I have been free from all temptation to write a single word reproachful to his character. To correct what was erroneous in his opinions, is not reproaching his character; it is but doing what I would that others should do to me.

The article entitled 'Paul's Ground of Rejoicing,' had been written (excepting the N. B.) prior to my seeing the testimony of Dr Dwight. It may properly be given in connexion with other testimonies from the 'Neighborhood of the Eternal World;' for a great part, if not all I have quoted from his testimony, was written when he was 'such an one as Paul the aged,' and one who lived in expectation soon to finish his course.'

TESTIMONIES

FROM THE

'NEIGHBORHOOD OF THE ETERNAL WORLD.'

PRESIDENT DWIGHT'S TESTIMONY.

Before his last sickness, President Dwight had a severe attack of disease, which brought him near to the grave. But from this sickness God so far restored him, that he was again able to preach; and he took occasion to preach to his students with direct allusion to his then recent sickness, and the views he entertained in the prospect of speedy dissolution. The following is an extract from his address, at the conclusion of the sermon. Speaking to the scholars of what might be their views and feelings on a death bed, he observed:

'But no acts of obedience will then appear to you to have merited, in any sense, acceptance with God. In this view, those acts of my life concerning which I had entertained the best hopes, which I was permitted to entertain, those which to me appeared the least exceptionable, were nothing and less than nothing. The mercy of God, as exercised towards our lost race

through the all-sufficient and glorious righteousness of the Redeemer, yielded me the only foundation of hope for good beyond the grave. During the long continuance of my disease, as I was always, except when in paroxysms of suffering, in circumstances entirely fitted for solemn contemplation, I had ample opportunity to survey the most interesting of all subjects on every side. As the result of all my investigations, let me assure you, and that from the neighborhood of the eternal world, *confidence in the righteousness of Christ* is the only foundation furnished, by earth or heaven, upon which, when you are about to leave the world, you can safely or willingly rest the everlasting life of your souls. To trust in anything else, will be to *feed upon the wind, and sup up the east wind.*' — 'Incidents,' &c, p. 90, 91.

Excepting the testimony of an inspired teacher against my present opinions, nothing perhaps would have been better adapted to shake my confidence in them than such a testimony from Dr Dwight, delivered under such circumstances. There was nothing in the character of the man, known to me, and nothing in the circumstances under which the testimony was delivered, which excites in my mind the least doubt of his sincerity. But one, greater than Dr Dwight, has taught me to 'call no man master;' and my heavenly Father has required me to love him with all my own understanding, and not with the understanding of any other man. Besides, observation has convinced me that good men may err, even in the immediate prospect of death and a judgment to come. I am, perhaps, at the present moment, in as near 'neighborhood of the eternal world' as President Dwight was, when the

above extract was written and delivered; and with all the care and solemnity which my situation demands, and with cordial respect for the character of Dr Dwight, I shall endeavor to examine his testimony, and compare it with the oracles of God.

The first sentence may be understood in different senses. In one sense it may be correct, in others, erroneous. It is this: 'But no acts of obedience will then appear to you to have merited, in any sense, acceptance with God.'

If the meaning is, that 'no acts of obedience' will appear to have *deserved* the pardon of our sins, and the blessing of eternal life, the sentiment is, in my opinion, perfectly correct. For we are 'saved by grace' — free and unpurchased.

But there are still two other senses in which the words may be understood. They may mean, that no acts of obedience are in themselves worthy of divine acceptance; or they may mean, that no acts of obedience can render the agent worthy of divine approbation, or have anything to do in his justification.

If the first of these be the meaning, the hypothesis is contradicted by a multitude of passages of scripture. Cain was taught by God a different doctrine: 'If thou *dost well* shalt thou not be accepted?' Many passages of scripture tell us distinctly what acts of obedience are acceptable to God, or with which he is well pleased. Besides, is it not reproachful to God to say, that he requires that which is unworthy of his acceptance? I suspect, however, that the latter of the two meanings is the one intended by Dr Dwight.

Here, again, I freely admit, that our obedience to

the gospel does not render us *deserving* of acceptance, pardon and divine approbation; it is, however, the *condition* on which those favors are promised and bestowed, according to the new covenant, — and it is also an indispensable *qualification* for our receiving them. Though the obedient and reformed sinner may not claim nor expect the promised favors, on the ground that he *deserves* them in *pay* for his obedience, yet he may expect them, and humbly plead for them, as favors which the mercy of God has promised to the obedient.

Another sentence may now be introduced: — 'The mercy of God, as exercised towards our lost race through the all-sufficient and glorious righteousness of the Redeemer, yielded me the only foundation of hope for good beyond the grave.'

I might have written this sentence myself, in accordance with my present views of divine truth; and, if I mistake not, it more correctly expresses my views than it does what I supposed to have been intended by Dr Dwight; for I suppose he meant to express the idea, that the 'righteousness of Christ' is the only ground of the sinner's justification, and consequently the only ground of hope. Instead of this, his language gives us the 'MERCY of God' — not the 'righteousness of Christ,' as the only 'foundation of hope for good beyond the grave.' He makes the 'righteousness of Christ' the medium 'through' which 'the mercy of God is exercised' or displayed. This is my own view of the subject; but not the idea which the Doctor meant to express.

The following sentence is, if I mistake not, as great a failure as the preceding, as to clearly expressing the

idea intended, — and a still greater failure as to expressing the truth: — 'As the result of all my investigations, let me assure you, and that from the neighborhood of the eternal world, *confidence in the righteousness of Christ* is the only foundation furnished, by earth or heaven, upon which, when you are about to leave the world, you can safely or willingly rest the everlasting life of your souls.'

The doctrine which the good Doctor meant to teach his pupils, is presumed to be this — that the RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST is the only foundation on which they could safely rest the everlasting life of their souls. But instead of this, he taught them that 'CONFIDENCE in the righteousness of Christ is the only foundation,' &c. What two ideas are more distinct than our 'CONFIDENCE' and the OBJECT in which we confide? They are just as distinct as the 'mercy of God' and the MEDIUM through which it is displayed — or as distinct as the mercy of God and the objects of that mercy.

I wish it to be clearly understood and kept in mind, that, in my opinion, all the favors we receive from God are of free grace. However obedient we may have been, we should ever feel, after all we may have done, that 'we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do.' We have done nothing which brings God into our debt; but we may have done that which he in mercy has promised to reward with pardon and eternal life. Hence, to speak of our obedience, that obedience which God has required by the gospel, as 'nothing and less than nothing,' is, in my view, improper, unwarranted, and of a bad tendency; for it is hardly reasonable to suppose that men

will be very careful to 'do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God,' if they are made to believe that so doing is 'nothing and less than nothing,' as to God's acceptance or approbation.

I have mentioned my belief that Dr D. failed to express his meaning, when he represented '*confidence* in the righteousness of Christ' as the only foundation for hope to rest upon in regard to everlasting life. Yet I think there is reason to fear that too many persons have no better foundation for their hope than their own confidence that the righteousness of Christ will be set to their account for justification. But it ought to be understood that men may have great confidence in the correctness of an erroneous opinion; and that no confidence or reliance, whatever may be its object, can be of saving advantage, unless it disposes us to a life of humble obedience to God.

I am not ignorant of the fact that there are several passages of scripture which have been supposed to teach, 'that the righteousness of Christ is the only ground of a sinner's justification.' I have spent months in a careful examination of the bible, in relation to this subject; but I have not only failed of finding the phrase, *the righteousness of Christ*, in the bible, but I have failed to find one text which even seemed to me to imply the doctrine in question; while, on the other hand, I have found a multitude of texts which not only seem to me to *imply* but to *assert* ideas in direct contradiction to the doctrine. Had the doctrine been true and important, we surely might expect to find it clearly stated, or at least unquestionably implied, in the instructions of our Saviour. But instead of teaching that his right-

cousness is the only ground of justification, and that our obedience is 'nothing and less than nothing,' as to our acceptance with God, he taught his hearers, that their acceptance, their pardon and salvation, depended so entirely on their obedience to his precepts, that if they obeyed, they would be pardoned and saved; and, if not, they must perish. Neither Moses nor any other prophet taught this doctrine with more clearness than it was taught by the Messiah. As in other papers I have brought to view much that was said by other inspired teachers, I shall, in this, confine myself to what was said by the faithful and true witness — and to but a part of what he said on the subject.

Such obedience as Christ has required, as conditions of divine favors, and which, he has assured us, will be rewarded by our heavenly Father, cannot with propriety be spoken of as nothing and less than nothing, as to God's acceptance or approbation. With this remark in view, I will mention some passages in the sermon on the mount.

After pronouncing those 'blessed' who are poor in spirit, and those who mourn, the meek, and those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemaker, and those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake; Jesus then added: 'Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for *great is your reward in heaven.*' Matt. v. 11, 12. Then, in the 44th and 45th verses, he commanded his hearers, 'Love your enemies — that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven.' Can that

be of no value which renders us like God or his children? Is his own image in us 'nothing,' in regard to our acceptance with him?

In the 6th chapter, we have distinct directions how we should not, and how we should, give alms, pray, and fast. In regard to each we are assured, that if we obey his directions, our heavenly Father will reward us openly. 'Your heavenly Father will *reward* you openly,' is thus three times repeated.

Having given a form of prayer, in which there was a petition for forgiveness, after the close of the prayer he enforced the duty of praying for pardon, by saying: 'For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you, but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses.' Matt. vi. 14, 15.

Who, in view of this passage, will say, that our obedience in forgiving one another is 'nothing and less than nothing,' as to our obtaining the forgiveness of God?

In chapter 7th, we have further instructions as to prayer, encouraged by promises: 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' v. 7. Then we are reminded of the kindness of parents in giving good things to their children. Christ then said, 'How much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?' vs. 9, 10, 11. Is asking, then, 'nothing' as to our obtaining?

Near the close of the sermon, we read: 'Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of our

Father who is in heaven.' Then Christ closed the sermon by letting us know, that he 'who heareth and *doeth* the sayings,' or precepts, of this sermon, may be likened to a 'wise man who built his house upon a rock;' and that he who heareth them and doeth them *not*, is like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand. Who then shall dare to say, that *doing* the will of the Father, and obeying the precepts of Christ, are 'nothing and less than nothing,' as to our acceptance and our safety?

Other passages of similar import, from different parts of the gospel, may further show the value and importance of our obedience.

'He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.' Matt. x. 41, 42.

'And he said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these who hear the word of God and do it. Luke viii. 21 — Matt. xii. 50.

'But love ye your enemies, do good and lend, hoping for nothing again, and your *reward* shall be great.' Luke vi. 35.

'But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, and the lame and the blind, and thou shalt be blessed, — for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.' Luke xiv. 13, 14.

A woman once said to Jesus, 'Blessed is the womb

that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked. But he said, Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.' Luke xi. 27, 28.

'Verily, verily I say unto you, if a man keep my sayings, he shall never see death.' John viii. 51.

If our obedience insures such favors as these, how is it possible that it should be 'nothing' in respect to God's approbation?

Dr Dwight's testimony had the advantage of being given under affecting circumstances, in view of death, and in 'the neighborhood of the eternal world.' I shall now introduce some passages from a testimony of Christ, delivered under circumstances not less affecting, the very evening before his crucifixion. That the force of what I am about to quote may be felt, I will observe, that such obedience as Christ has assigned as a reason for his and his Father's love to his disciples, may surely be regarded as a reason for their acceptance with God.

'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.' John xiv. 34, 35.

'He that hath my commandments and *keepeth* them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, — and I will love him, and manifest myself unto him. —— If a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.' John xiv. 21, 23.

'Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much — so shall ye be my disciples. If ye keep my

commandments ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.' John xv. 8 — 10.

'For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.' John xvi. 27.

These passages are a part of the dying testimony of him who loved us, delivered to his disciples a few hours prior to his crucifixion. As he knew he was about to leave them, his ardent desire was, to excite them to duty, and to console them in that hour of trial. If he knew that his sufferings were to be the only ground of their pardon, that their obedience was 'nothing and less than nothing,' as to their acceptance with God, and his righteousness must be the only ground on which they could be accepted and approved, why did he not try to console their minds by communicating these ideas? or rather, why did he communicate ideas in that solemn hour so perfectly the reverse? He doubtless felt as much for his apostles, as Dr Dwight did for his students, and as strong a desire to preserve them from fatal errors. Yet no teacher was ever farther than he was from teaching that our obedience is 'nothing' in regard to our acceptance with God.

If, then, from such a 'neighborhood of the eternal world,' our Saviour could teach that God is glorified when his children bear much of the obedient fruits of love, and that he loved the disciples of Christ because they loved him, and believed that he came out from God, with what propriety can any minister teach that our obedience is 'nothing,' or of no value, as to our acceptance with God?

In contradiction to such views, I shall now mention two passages from the lips of Christ, in which he taught that works of obedience will be approved at the final judgment, and assigned as the reason or ground on which the agents will be accepted and rewarded.

In the 25th chapter of Matthew's gospel we have the parable of the talents given to different servants, to some more, and others less. Two of the servants are represented as equally faithful, though one of them had five talents given him, and the other but two. The following is the language of their Lord, when they were called to an account. To each he said: 'Well done thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'

In the subsequent part of the same chapter we have another representation of the value of obedience at the final reckoning. The sheep and the goats, or the righteous and the wicked, having been separated, the one placed on the right hand, the other on the left, we hear the following language: 'Then shall the King say to them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!' But what reason is assigned for so great a favor? Are they said to be approved only on the ground of the righteousness of Christ? Let us hearken to his own voice. The following are his words: —

'For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; I was naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came

unto me. — Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me.'

It is worthy of particular notice, that, in each of the two cases now before us, the most decided approbation of the faithful or righteous is given on the ground of their fidelity or obedience; and no other reason is given in either case. It is also to be observed that in both of the parables, persons of an opposite character are disapproved and condemned on this ground, that they had failed to perform those acts of obedience on the ground of which the righteous had been accepted and approved. I will here only ask, do we find that Christ made 'nothing' of obedience as to acceptance with God?

We have some account of Christ's views on this subject many years after his ascension. 'The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him,' and which 'he sent and signified by his angel unto his servant John,' contains the following passages:

'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne.' Rev. iii. 21.

The above is the language of Christ himself. In the following, John says:

'And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.' Rev. xiv. 13. Near the close of the vision John again heard the voice from heaven, 'Blessed are they that DO HIS COMMANDMENTS, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.'

These passages are perfectly harmonious with what the Messiah taught prior to his crucifixion. It was by 'obedience unto death' that he overcame, and obtained his throne; and it is by following his example and doing the will of the Father, that his disciples must overcome, so as to sit with him in glory. Those who 'die in the Lord' are his obedient disciples. 'Their works follow them,' and will be exhibited as the ground of the approving decision. 'Well done, good and faithful servants,' or 'Come ye blessed,' proceeds from the lips of the judge, together with the reason why they are permitted to enter into the joy of their Lord and inherit eternal life. Such being the views of Christ, we cannot wonder at the last declaration quoted from his lips, — BLESSED ARE THEY THAT DO HIS COMMANDMENTS.

The contrast now in view, between the testimony of the Messiah and that of Dr Dwight, seems to me about as perfect as it could be made by the use of words. One or the other of the testimonies must have been founded in mistake. Though I was once avowedly of the opinion of Dr D., I then saw and felt that, on some account or other, obedience to the gospel was essential to salvation. I cannot doubt that such was the case with the Doctor, and that such is the case with multitudes who have adopted his views. But I may say with truth, that while I professed to be of that opinion, it was always embarrassing to my mind; and of all my former opinions from which, on examination, I have dissented, no one has occasioned me more astonishment than that now under consideration. So little is to be found in scripture which even *seems* to be in its favor, and so much that is clearly against it, that I am

amazed that it ever acquired popularity. I cannot but deeply regret that there ever was a time when I was so influenced by tradition or by veneration for other fallible men, as to accede to a doctrine so much at variance with the testimony of the faithful and true witness. It has often been called a 'soul humbling doctrine,' and has proved to be so to me. I think it will be so to others, who now profess to regard it as true, should they be brought to see, as I have been, how plainly it contradicts the testimony of Christ himself.

It is 'the mercy of God through the righteousness of Jesus Christ' that has taught us, that there is forgiveness with our heavenly Father for all who repent and obey the gospel. The mercy which has taught us how God loved the world, and that with him there is forgiveness, has also taught us what we must *do* to be saved. It has taught us that we must take up the cross and follow the Messiah in DOING the will of the Father who sent him to be the Saviour of the world. By his word, or the truths which he has taught, by precept and example, Christ is 'the light of the world,' the way, the truth and the life; and all who truly obey him, may unite with Paul and say, 'of God he is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.' Before his crucifixion, Christ said to his apostles, 'Now ye are clean through the *word* that I have spoken unto you.' But as he was 'obedient unto death,' and sealed his testimony with his blood, the truths which he had taught derived from that event a peculiar, affecting, and transforming efficacy. Hence James thus speaks of the efficacy of the word, as employed by God — 'of his own will begat he us by the word of truth,' — 're-

ceive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.'

The more I venerate the character, the attainments, and the usefulness of President Dwight, the more I am astonished that, with the bible in his hand, and after so many years spent in the study of that volume, he could speak to young students of *obedience* as 'nothing and less than nothing,' as to their acceptance with God. In view of the more perfect testimony of Christ, and my own 'neighborhood to the eternal world,' I am constrained to say, that I regard gospel obedience as important to me as the salvation of my soul, — and equally important as to my acceptance with God. If I do the will of God, I shall be saved; if not, I must perish.

It deserves to be noticed, in connection with the foregoing testimonies, that Paul's ground of rejoicing coincides with what I have attempted to establish as the scriptural terms of acceptance with God.

Intelligent and candid readers will admit, that no one of the inspired writers seems to have been more deeply impressed than Paul was with this truth, that the gospel salvation should be ascribed to the free grace of God as its original source, and to Jesus Christ as the Mediator through whom God was pleased to reveal and display his forgiving love to sinful men. Of the wonderful love of Christ, in becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, Paul appears to have had the most exalted conceptions. To cultivate and display the same spirit seems to have been his highest ambition. Yet so far was he from relying on

the righteousness of Christ as the only ground of his personal justification, or acceptance with God, and so far from regarding his own personal obedience to Christ as of no value, as 'dross and dung,' that under the severest trials and most bitter persecutions, he could adopt for himself and others the following language: —

'For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have our conversation in the world.' 2 Cor. i. 12.

In regard to the joy he felt in having been an instrument of the conversion of others, he could say to them:

'For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy.' 1 Thess. i. 19, 20.

In the prospect of speedy dissolution, and perhaps too by the death of the cross, he could urge Timothy to 'endure afflictions, do the work of an Evangelist, and make full proof of his ministry' — assigning the following reason: —

'For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me in that day; and not to me only, but unto all who love his appearing.' 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7, 8.

Repeatedly he called on other Christians to imitate his example, as he had imitated the example of Christ; and in the following manner he speaks of the advantages of godliness: —

'Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come.'

By godliness here Paul did not mean the righteousness or obedience of Christ, for in the preceding verse he exhorted Timothy to 'exercise himself unto Godliness,' and then in the verse quoted he gives his reasons for so doing by stating the profits of godliness.

It is impossible for me to reconcile these and many other passages in Paul's writings, with the belief that he understood and taught that his gospel obedience was of no value, or like 'dross and dung' in regard to his acceptance with God, — and that he relied wholly on the obedience of Christ for his personal justification. Had he been of these opinions, as many have supposed he was, he might have said in the first passage I have quoted, as follows : —

'This is our rejoicing,' that we are not to be accepted of God on account of our own righteousness, or our 'simplicity and godly sincerity,' but wholly on the ground of the righteousness of Christ. In the second he might have said, this is our glory and joy that the righteousness of Christ is the only ground of our justification, and not our faithfulness and success as the ministers of Christ. In the third passage he might have said, 'I am now ready to be offered,' for I have renounced all reliance on my obedience to Christ as his apostle, and trust wholly in his obedience to God for my acceptance with the Father. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of Christ's righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge will give me in that day.

Instead of saying as he did of the profit of godliness,

he might have said, Godliness is of no value ; it is but dross and dung in regard to God's approbation ; but the righteousness of Christ is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is and that which is to come.

But Paul was of a different opinion from what many have supposed ; and while he could renounce his former pharisaical righteousness, as of no value, calling it his 'own righteousness which is of the law,' he did so that he might possess and recommend the more excellent righteousness which results from an obedient faith in Christ Jesus. But are we not taught by Paul, Romans iv. 5, that God 'justifieth the ungodly ?' And if so, what can be the meaning but this, that God has no respect to our godliness, or our obedience to the gospel, in the Act of Justification; and that he justifies us solely on the ground of what Christ has done and suffered ? To this I answer —

The text has doubtless been so understood by thousands; but Dr Macknight has, in my opinion, given the more correct meaning. He says, 'The apostle's meaning is —*justifieth him who had been ungodly* — in like manner as Matt. xiv. 31, *the dumb speak* signifies that persons, who had been dumb, speak.'

Besides, if I have not misunderstood the orthodox clergy of New England, they believe, as I do, that the sinner is not justified in a state of impenitency as an impenitent sinner, nor until he becomes an humble, penitent believer, — and that this humble and reformed state of mind is a condition of justification. What then is this short of saying, or at least implying, that God has respect to something very different from the

righteousness of Christ in our justification? Why does he defer justification till we become humble and penitent? And why make these exercises an indispensable condition of pardon, if he has no respect to our obedience, but justifies wholly on another ground? Instead of saying that the righteousness of Christ is the only ground of our justification, I would rather say, it is the *ground* of our faith in him, a *means* of our being brought into a reconciled state, and the *standard* by which we are to be justified; for we are to be justified no farther than we are conformed to Christ, having the same mind that was in him. He who has this mind in him, will rejoice in God, as the source of every good and perfect gift; he will rejoice in Jesus Christ, as the image of the invisible God, the medium through whom God has seen fit to dispense his spiritual blessings, who humbled himself and became obedient unto the death of the cross, and who has been exalted by God as a Prince and a Saviour, and the Judge of the living and the dead; — and still he will rejoice in this, the testimony of a good conscience, that with godliness and simplicity he has had his conversation in the world.

It has been a common opinion that Paul was the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews; and if this opinion is correct, we have some more striking passages of his, in agreement with those already quoted, and adapted to correct the opinion which has been so long entertained of his views of justification. I shall, however, remark particularly on but two passages.

In the eleventh chapter of this epistle, we have an account of what various persons did 'by faith;' from which it is evident that the faith which is pleasing to God, is a faith which worketh by love, and produces the fruits of obedience to him; and that the obedience thus produced is what is called 'the righteousness of faith:' hence obedient men are called 'the righteous,' or 'the just.' As the righteousness of Christ consisted in his obedience to God, or in doing the will of the Father, so it is in regard to his disciples. So far as they are obedient, they are righteous, and will be so denominated when the sheep shall have been separated from the goats.'

The first example of faith mentioned in the scriptures, is that of Abel. 'By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous — God testifying of his gifts that he was righteous; and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh.' In what particular manner God testified of his gifts, we know not. It might be by causing fire to descend to consume the sacrifice, as in succeeding times. But it is pretty evident that in some way God testified his approbation of his offering, on the ground of which he was denominated righteous. And what is this but making obedience the ground of divine acceptance?

Enoch is the next on the list of men who, by the obedience of faith, obtained the approbation of God.

'By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death, and was not found, for God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossi-

ble to please him ; for he that cometh unto God must learn that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.'

May we not say, that Enoch's having the 'testimony that he pleased God,' is equivalent to having the testimony of being accepted and approved by God ? It is said that before his translation he had this testimony ; and this testimony was countersigned by his translation. It is said, 'by faith Enoch was translated.' This may mean no more than that by the obedience of his faith he so pleased God, as to assure to himself the privilege of translation, that he might not see death. So Christ said to a person that he healed, 'Thy faith hath saved thee,' as it was the condition or ground on which the favor was granted. The writer of this epistle doubtless had reference to what is said of Enoch in the book of Genesis. There it is said, that 'Enoch walked with God.' Walking with God implies both faith and obedience ; and it was in this way that 'he pleased God.' Without this obedient faith, it is 'impossible to please him ;' for faith without works is dead and worthless.

'He that cometh unto God must believe that he is —' that is, that he exists ; he must also believe 'that he is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him.'

It would be folly and mockery for a man to profess or pretend to ask God for favors, who does not believe that such a Being exists. To have any rational hope of success in praying to God, we must not only believe in his existence ; we must also believe 'that he is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him —' that he is both able and willing to bestow favors on those who worship him in spirit and in truth. It is the obedient,

and those only, who diligently seek the Lord. To pray acceptably then, we must believe that obedience is acceptable to God — so acceptable that he is disposed to reward them who obey him, as a proof of his approbation. Hence we are told, that whosoever calleth on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

As saving faith implies cordial obedience to God, we may surely say, that without obedience it is impossible to please him; and the prophet Samuel has assured us, that 'to *obey* is better than sacrifice.' We may all say with perfect truth, that he who cometh unto God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them who diligently obey him. Let the question then be seriously asked, Is a belief that the righteousness of Christ is the only ground of our acceptance with God, the same as a belief that God is a rewarder of them who diligently seek or obey him? Can a belief that God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him be the same as a belief that obedience is 'nothing and less than nothing' as to our acceptance with God?

I shall bring to view one passage more from the epistle to the Hebrews. 'But to do good and communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.' Hebrews xiii, 16. It may be presumed that everything is acceptable to God with which he is 'well pleased;' and that he accepts of men who offer to him sacrifices with which he is well pleased. Nor can it be denied that 'to do good and communicate' are works of obedience. It seems to me impossible therefore to reconcile this text with what Dr Dwight has said of obedience. To accommodate the text to

his hypothesis should we not read as follows? 'To do good and communicate forget not;' but always bear in mind that obedience is 'nothing and less than nothing' as to your acceptance with God.

If we compare what is said of the faith of Enoch with what is said of 'to do good and communicate,' we may have reason to believe that faith and doing good mutually imply each other. How pertinent then is the exhortation — 'Let us have grace whereby we may serve God *acceptably* with reverence and godly fear.' Hebrews xii, 28.

I might subjoin the testimony of Peter, as given in some passages in his epistles, which are supposed to have been written near the close of his own life, and after the death of Paul; but as he appears then to have been of the same opinion that he was when he preached at the house of Cornelius, and as this was an extraordinary occasion — one which required him to be particular and explicit, I shall introduce what he said on that memorable day.

Cornelius, the centurion, was not only a military officer, but a Gentile; yet he was a 'devout man, and one who feared God, with all his house, gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.' To this pious man God sent an angel, with the following message: 'Thy prayers and thine alms have come up for a memorial before God; and now send men to Joppa and call for Simon whose surname is Peter; he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.' Cornelius, without delay, complied with this direction. But such were the prejudices of the Jews against the Gentiles, that it

required a miracle to prepare the mind of Peter to comply with the request. This, however, God took care to effect in due season, by a vision, in which he was taught this lesson: 'What God has cleansed, that call not thou common.' Being thus instructed, he complied with the request from Cornelius; and when he arrived he found many collected together to hear him. Peter then related the vision by which God had prepared his mind to come; and then said, 'I ask, therefore, for what intent ye have sent for me?' Cornelius, relating his own vision and the direction he received from the angel, then observed: 'Now, therefore, are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.'

'Then Peter opened his mouth,' and the first words that proceeded were the following: 'Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him.'

But did not Peter go on and explain, that God had recently inflicted the punishment due to us all on the Messiah, who was crucified at Jerusalem, and that his sufferings were the only ground of pardon, and his righteousness the only ground of acceptance with God? No, verily; no such idea is so much as alluded to in the sermon. Having uttered the important declaration which I have quoted, Peter proceeded in the following manner: —

'The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ; (he is Lord of all;) that word, I say, you know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the

baptism which John preached; how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed with the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even unto us who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he who is ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.' *

Thus was Cornelius, and all the Gentiles then assembled, clearly taught by the Apostle, that the blessings of peace, remission of sin, and acceptance with God, which the Messiah had been sent to reveal, were not for the Jews only, but for all who should become believers in him, or submit to his instructions. That God approved the sermon we have reason to believe, for 'while Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on them which heard the word;' and Peter 'commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.' Where, then, is the intelligent Christian who can seriously reflect on the foregoing facts, and not say, in the language of Peter, 'Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation HE THAT FEARETH HIM AND WORKETH RIGHTEOUSNESS IS ACCEPTED WITH HIM.'

* See Acts x. 34 to 43.

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A LITERAL SACRIFICE.

In reading the New Testament, especially the Epistles, we meet with language like the following, in relation to 'the author and finisher of our faith.' — 'This is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many, for the remission of sins.'* — 'Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.'† — 'For even Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us.'‡ — 'Who, his own self, bare our sins in his own body on the tree.'§ — 'Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God.'‖ — 'We are sanctified through the offering up of the body of Jesus Christ.' 'This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins.' — 'How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the Eternal spirit offered himself, without spot, to God, purge your consciences.' — 'He

* Matt. xvi. 28. Luke xxii. 20. † John i. 29. ‡ 1 Cor. v. 7.
§ 1 Pet. ii. 24. ‖ Eph. v. 2.

appeared to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself.' 'Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many:'* with many other passages, not, perhaps, more strong and prominent, but of the same general character.†

The question very naturally arises in the mind of a serious reader of the scriptures, whether this language is to receive a *literal*, or a *figurative* construction. This is an important inquiry. If we say it is to be construed *strictly* or *literally*, the consequence seems irresistibly to follow, that Jesus Christ was offered, or that he offered himself, as an expiatory sacrifice for the sins of either a part or the whole of the human race: that by his blood the Creator was rendered propitious to his creatures; or that Jesus was, in the words of the Westminster divines, literally and properly, 'a sacrifice to satisfy divine Justice:' and we must receive that as the doctrine of the scriptures, and convert it as we may to our spiritual nourishment; and to the correction and elevation of our views of the divine character and government. But if, on the other hand, we are to give all this sacrificial language a *metaphorical* or *figurative* construction, the doctrine just stated will derive from it no support; and we shall be left free to understand it in a manner which shall accord with the known and ordinary principles of the moral government of God; with those views of his character which are given us in other parts of the scripture; and with the ordinary acceptation of the same or similar lan-

* Heb. x. 10. 12. ix. 14. 26. 28.

† See Mark xiv. 24. 1 Cor. xi. 24. 2 Cor. v. 21. 1 John ii. 2. iv. 10.

guage applied by the sacred writers to other persons and things.

In relation to the exposition of the scriptures there is no question more important than this now before us, whether the sacrificial language used by the sacred writers in respect to Jesus Christ is to be construed strictly or metaphorically. We ought, then, to come to the question as those who are to give an account; — who are to answer, at a future day, for our use or abuse of the treasures of heavenly wisdom which are entrusted to our charge: — for our use or abuse of those high faculties, to which the Divine Being has addressed the revelation of his character and purposes contained in the sacred volume; and as those who ought to be ready to answer for that easy credulity which believes too much, not less than for that cautious skepticism which at last believes too little.

We begin the inquiry, then, by remarking that, if the passages in the New Testament which speak of Jesus as a sacrifice to God, when *strictly* construed, shall be found to harmonize with each other, *and* with other plain passages of the scriptures, *and* with known facts, then they *may* be construed literally; although at the same time, if, when understood *figuratively*, they be equally harmonious with known facts, with other parts of scripture, and with the usages of language, they *may* also be construed figuratively: and, in that case, it might still remain a question whether a figurative or a literal construction should prevail. But if these several passages, when construed *literally*, be found to contradict *other passages of scripture, or certain*

known facts, or each other, then, the literal *must* be abandoned for a metaphorical construction.

How then, in the first place, does the effect produced upon the mind by understanding literally the several passages quoted from the New Testament, in the beginning of this article, and others like them, harmonize with language like the following? 'Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?'* 'Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; burnt offering and sin offering thou hast not required.'† 'Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it; thou delightest not in burnt offering.'‡ 'He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.'§ 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him, even to our God for he will abundantly pardon.'‖ These are but a few from a multitude of texts in the Old Testament either expressly declaring, or plainly implying that our Heavenly Father, who is also our Judge, is ready to forgive the penitent merely in consideration, or on condition, of his repentance and reformation; and that a literal sacrifice, either of man or beast, considered as a religious act, or anything more than a security, or a test, of allegiance to the Jewish theocracy, is not what God requires at the hand of his creatures. The same impression is deepened

* Mich. vi. 7. † Ps. xl. 6. ‡ Ps. li. 16.
§ Prov. xxviii. 13. ‖ Isai. lv. 7.

when we find this language quoted from the Old Testament into the New: 'Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not; — in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast no pleasure:'* and when we hear Jesus himself approving and confirming the opinion of the scribe,† that to love God and our neighbor is more than all whole burnt offering and sacrifice. From this latter class of texts, according to the only construction of which they appear to be capable, we infer irresistibly that pardon is ready and free to the penitent, and that it depends, in no case, upon the condition of any offering or sacrifice for sin: while, from the former class, if construed literally, the conviction seems equally irresistible that Jesus, our Lord, has become a Saviour by having offered himself up as a proper sacrifice to propitiate his Father, by expiating our sins. Are these representations of the divine proceedings consistent with each other? Does not a literal construction of the former class of texts make them irreconcilable with the latter class? There certainly appears to be either discord between them, or, what is no better than discord — 'harmony not understood.'

Secondly. Does the doctrine that Jesus was a proper sacrifice, which seems to result from a literal construction of the sacrificial language applied to him in the New Testament, agree with *known facts?*

It must be granted, no one will deny, that if Christ was literally a sacrifice to God, *he must have been offered as such;* he must have been put to death by some one *as* a sacrifice. For the very nature of a sacrifice

* Heb. x. 5, 6. † Mark xii. 33.

is that of a religious offering made by some person or persons to some God or Gods, as a religious act. There is no prayer, where there is no intent to pray. In the idea of a gift, is embraced that of a giver. There can be no sacrifice where there is not an *offering made* with a *sacrificial intent*. If Jesus then was a sacrifice, who sacrificed him?

1. Was he offered, as a sacrifice, by the *Romans?* They were his immediate executioners. It was a Roman magistrate that pronounced sentence of death against him; a Roman soldiery that executed that sentence; a Roman spear that pierced his side. Was he offered, as a sacrifice, by the Romans? — To this hypothesis it may be objected, in the first place, that *human sacrifices were never allowed by the established laws of Rome*. It is true that a few, very few, cases of human sacrifices can be found in Roman history during the eight hundred years from the foundation of the city to the death of Christ. Some time after Christ, during the reign of Nero or Vespasian, Pliny states that human sacrifices sometimes occurred in Rome. But, before that declining period of Roman greatness and virtue, we find but a single instance in which human sacrifices were offered in Rome, to propitiate the gods: and this took place nearly two centuries before Christ, when the approach of Hannibal to its gates had thrown the city into the utmost consternation. But the historian, to whom we are indebted for the knowledge of this fact, assures us that the place had never before been stained by his countrymen with the blood of human victims. And from the terms of abhorrence in

which the Romans, at that very time, speak of those nations which sacrificed even their prisoners of war, we learn in what detestation human sacrifices were held by that people.*

To the present hypothesis it may be objected, secondly, that *Rome*, the city itself, was the *only place in which human victims were ever offered by the Romans.* But Jesus was put to death in Judea. — A third objection is, that, among the Romans, *all sacrifices were offered by their priesthood;* whereas Jesus was executed by their soldiery. And, fourthly, it may be objected that, whereas the few human victims that were offered in Rome were *buried alive*† Jesus, on the contrary, suffered death *upon a cross*, a species of punishment inflicted by the Romans, only upon slaves, robbers, assassins, and those who were adjudged guilty of sedition;‡ and we know, for the evangelists inform us, that this was the crime for which our Lord was tried and, however improperly, condemned. — Was he, then, offered as a sacrifice by the Romans?

2. Was he offered, as a sacrifice, by the *Jews.* To the idea that he was, the first objection which we have to offer is, that there is no evidence in the scriptures that, in procuring his death, they had any *intent* to offer him as a sacrifice. And we must remember that a sacrificial intent is as indispensable, in order to constitute anything a literal sacrifice, as an intent to pray, is to render any address a prayer. And, secondly, we

* See the speech of Cn. Metellus before the Senate, in regard to the Galli, in Asia. Livii Hist. Lib. xxxviii.

† Jahn's Biblical Archæology, sec. 404.

object they could not have intended to offer Jesus as a sacrifice, for the following reasons. 1. The only sacrifices which the Jews ever did, or ever could offer, in the land of Canaan, without committing a crime that was construed into treason, and capitally punished as such, were those which were *expressly appointed in the Mosaic law.* That law not only does not permit human sacrifices, but it repeatedly forbids them;* and abounds with the most fearful denunciations against them. 2. All the bloody or animal sacrifices which were required or allowed by Moses were either *piacular*, such as were offered in expiation of trespasses or sins; *or eucharistical*, such as were offered as testimonials of gratitude. All these must be *animals* of certain kinds, distinctly specified. With these facts before our eyes, it is a needless waste of labor to prove that our Lord could not have been regarded by the Jews as a literal sacrifice, either eucharistical, or piacular — either as an expression of gratitude, or as an atonement for sin. 3. A third reason why the Jews could not have considered Jesus a sacrifice, of any kind, is that, from before the entrance of the Israelites into the land of Canaan, they were strictly and repeatedly forbidden, under penalty of excision, to offer any sacrifices

* Levit. xviii. 21. Deut. xviii. 10. 2 Kings xvii. 17, 18. Ps. cvi. 37, 38, 40. Deut. xii. 31. — If then, Jesus *had* been offered by the Jews, *animo sacrificandi*, with the most sacrificial intent, the offering would have been a capital crime by their law, and, of course, not an acceptable sacrifice with God, who gave their law; for he accepts no sacrifice of which the very offering is guilty. To even a heathen moralist it was obvious 'nullam *scelere* religionem exsolvi;' — that no religious duty is discharged by the perpetration of a crime. — Livii Hist. Lib. ii.

whatever, except *in such place as the Lord should appoint for that purpose.** Before the building of the temple, the place of sacrifice seems not to have been permanently fixed; but the altar was raised wherever the tabernacle stood, or wherever the ark of the Covenant, which was the great sanctuary of the Israelitish religion, happened to rest.† The object of this law, from which there was no exception, except that a *prophet* had authority to dispense with it,‡ was to guard the worshippers, and even the priests of Jehovah, from all temptation and all opportunity of relapsing into the idolatry by which they were surrounded, and to which they were so propense. This law was, it is true, often violated by wicked monarchs before, and even after, the building of the temple. It was occasionally violated even down to the time of the transportation into Babylon; and, indeed, the transgression of this law was the principal cause of the transportation. But after the return of the Jews from Babylon, they observed that law so faithfully, that not an instance of its violation in Judea § can be shown till the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. And it is owing to the destruction of the temple and altar in Jerusalem, that all Jewish sacrifices have ever since been sus-

* Levit. xvii. 1—9.—especially vs. 8, 9. Deut. xii. 5—28. Levit. xxvi. 30.

† See Michaelis, Mos. Law, sec. 188.

‡ 1 Sam. xiii. 8—14, xvi. 1—5. 1 Kings xviii. 21—40.

§ The case of Onias, in Egypt, (Joseph. Ant. Jud. xiii. 3 sec. 3. Michaelis' Mos. Law, sec. 188.) could hardly be considered as an exception, had the observation been general. But it is no exception restricted, as the statement is, to *Judea.*

pended. From the return of the Jews from Babylon to this moment, the offering of a sacrifice, of any kind, in any other place than the altar and temple in Jerusalem, would have appeared to them as an inexpiable offence, the most shocking of all abominations. But Jesus 'suffered without the gate.'*

Again, 4. As with the Romans, so it was, especially after the captivity, with the Jews; all their bloody sacrifices must be offered *by the hands of their own priesthood.*† The interference of strangers, and especially of their enemies, with the offering of their sacrifices, would have been regarded by the Jews with the utmost horror. Yet Jesus died by the hands of the idolatrous Romans, and the Jews were clamorous that he *might* die by their hands. Did they, then, consider him as a sacrifice? *Could* they have so considered him? If in any sense, it can be said that Jesus was sacrificed by the Jews, it can be only in a figurative sense. It may be said that they sacrificed him to their envy, to one of the most bitter and malignant of their own passions; but not to the God of their fathers, the God of holiness and mercy, either as an expression of their gratitude or as an expiation of their sins.

3. Did Jesus, then, sacrifice *himself?* It will not be denied that, as, at one time, it might be said that the Jews sacrificed our Lord to their envy, so, at another, it may be said, that he sacrificed himself upon the altar of his duty, or of benevolence, or of pity to the human race. But this is figurative language; and by it we mean that he devoted himself, gave up his life, rather

* Heb. xiii. 12. † Jahn's Arch. sec. 378.

than abandon the arduous and painful offices which he had been commissioned to fill; — the offices of our Teacher, example, and Saviour. But this metaphorical sacrifice is the result of a *metaphorical* construction of the passages under consideration. A literal construction of those passages makes the Saviour not only a literal sacrifice, but the greatest of all literal sacrifices. *As* such, we now ask, did he offer himself?

To the idea that he did, it may be objected, 1. That he never told his disciples that he intended to offer himself, he never gave them to understand that he considered himself — as a sacrifice. On the contrary, he did tell his disciples that he came, among other things, to give his life, not a sacrifice, but a *ransom* for many. On this fact we have something more to offer shortly. 2. We may object to the supposition that Jesus offered himself as a literal sacrifice to God, in any sense, the known fact, to which all the evangelists testify, that he did not offer himself at all. While he did not shun death, if it lay where duty led him, he did not seek it. He was followed, arrested, led away to trial and to death. He did not court danger but rather sought to avoid it. When we see the Roman Curtius* voluntarily leaping into a gulf to appease the offended gods of his country and his worship; or the two Decii, father and son,† after deliberately devoting themselves as victims, and, as such, receiving consecration from the priesthood, voluntarily rush into the thickest ranks of their enemies, and fall by their swords, we say that *here* are men who offer themselves a sac-

* Liv. Hist. Lib. vii. † Id. Lib. viii. x.

rifice to their country and its gods. We admire their patriotism; and, while we lament their superstition, we give them credit for a lofty, though perhaps misguided, devotion. But how different from the conduct of these men was that of Jesus of Nazareth! They voluntarily plunged into the abyss, that they they might be destroyed. He cast himself upon the current of his duty, and was borne on by that. They sought death. He merely did not shrink from it, when called by duty to meet it. They actively gave themselves to the destruction which they might have escaped. He passively, though magnanimously, submitted to that which appeared inevitable. So far from courting his sufferings and seeking death, his prayer to his Heavenly Father was reiterated and earnest, that, if it were possible, the cup which was preparing for him might pass from him. How then can it be said that Jesus offered *himself* to God as a literal sacrifice of any kind? — And if it is a fact, that he did not offer himself, — if it is a fact that neither the Romans nor the Jews offered him — as a sacrifice, by whom was he so offered? — Is not the literal construction of the sacrificial language relating to him, contradicted by so many known facts, that we ought to hesitate before we adopt it?

Thirdly. Do not many of the texts in which Jesus is spoken of as a sacrifice, when literally construed, contradict *each other*, no less than other scriptures, and known facts? — 'Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a *body* hast thou prepared me.'* For what? — A *sacrifice!* to be made an *offering!* — Again; we have

* Heb. x. 5.

just remarked that although Jesus never spoke of himself as a *sacrifice*, yet he did tell his disciples that he came to give his life a *ransom* for many.* Now, though, in the metaphorical use of language, we may say, of the same thing, now, that it is a sacrifice, and now a ransom, we are not allowed that license when we are using language in its literal sense. Strictly speaking, a sacrifice is one thing, and a ransom is another, so different that one can neither be used nor mistaken for the other. If, then, the body, or the blood, or the life of Jesus was, either strictly or figuratively, a *ransom*, as he declares that it was, either strictly *or* figuratively, — it could not have been a literal *sacrifice*.

Again. Does the writer to the Hebrews,† in one of the texts quoted at the beginning of this article, say, 'This man, after that he had once offered *a sacrifice for sins?*' Paul, in another of these texts, says: 'for even Christ our *passover*, is sacrificed for us.'‡ We have already seen that all bloody sacrifices under the Mosaic law, the only sacrifices in Judea that were not idolatrous, were either *piacular* or *eucharistical*. All *sacrifices for sins* were piacular. The *passover* however was eucharistical.§ The literal construction of one of these texts makes Jesus a piacular sacrifice, an offering made as an expiation or atonement for sin. The literal construction of another makes him an eucharistical sacrifice. But if he be, either strictly or metaphorically, as one text represents him, an eucharistical sacrifice, an acknowledgment of divine mercy, — he cannot be as the letter of another would seem to make

* Matt. xx. 28. † Heb. x. 12. ‡ 1 Cor. v. 7.

§ Jahn's Arch. sec. 353. See also sec. 354.

him, a piacular sacrifice, — a satisfaction of divine justice.

Once more. 'This,' says our Lord, 'is my blood of the New Covenant.'* By this we are probably to understand that the blood or death of Jesus was the ratificaton, sanction, or seal, — the evidence or surety — of that New Covenant of which he was the Mediator. But the animal that was slain or sacrificed, among all Oriental nations, in ratification of a Covenant, was never considered as a piacular, but always as an eucharistical sacrifice.† They were not indeed exclusively sacrifices of thanksgiving, as were some others; but they were directly opposed to expiatory offerings. If Jesus, therefore, was literally a sacrifice of either of these three kinds, — *federal*, a sacrifice in ratification of a covenant; — *paschal*, an offering made at the passover; — or *piacular*, a sacrifice for sins; — he could not have been either of the two. If he was a *paschal*, he could have been neither a piacular nor a federal sacrifice: if a *piacular*, neither a federal nor paschal: if a *federal*, neither a paschal nor a piacular. But a literal construction of the passages in question, makes him either or all of them indifferently. Is not this alone sufficient proof that he was literally neither? Is it not sufficient proof that a metaphorical construction of these texts must be adopted, since a literal construction arrays them in such direct contradiction *to each other*, to the plain *declarations of God in other parts of the scriptures*, and to *known incontrovertible facts?*

Before answering these questions affirmatively we

*Matt. xxvi. 28.

† Jahn's Arch. sec. 383, supported Exod. xxiv. 4—8.

ought perhaps to pause, and ask ourselves whether it is according to the authorized usages of language to give a figurative interpretation to expressions so direct, and apparently so plain, as the sacred writers use in most of the texts which we are considering. This is undoubtedly a proper inquiry, and it ought to be faithfully pursued. At the same time, however, we ought to look back upon the ground that we have already gone over, and seriously consider that, having shown that a literal interpretation of the texts in question makes them directly contradictory to other passages of scripture, — to known facts — and to themselves;— no other alternative now remains to us than either to give them a figurative construction, or to reject them as false, because thus contradictory.

Bearing this consideration in mind, then, do we not find expressions similar to many of these in question, in ordinary use, in our own times, in the frigid zone of an occidental and modern language? We say, of the intemperate man, that he *gives himself up* to his appetites; of the sensualist, that *he sacrifices himself* upon the altar of his passions: and by this we mean that they abandon themselves respectively to vicious indulgences though their vices are their destruction. The parent *suffers for his children*. The patriot, with a generous devotion, *gives himself up as a sacrifice* to his country, when he endangers and loses his all — his life itself, in its defence. But by this language no one understands that the parent, or patriot, literally offers himself as a propitiatory sacrifice for his family or his country. Civil liberty is secured, even its best estate, by the *sacrifice* of our natural rights. The great cause of phi-

lanthropy is served only by the philanthropist's *taking upon himself* a part of the *sufferings* of those whom he travels and toils and watches to bless. Yet, by the use of such language, nobody is led into the belief of a literal sacrifice, or a literal vicarious suffering. As we go back into the depths of antiquity, we find, in writers of the highest authority, language still more bold, though of the same general character. Says Cicero, speaking of his efforts and privations in saving his country from the conspiracy of Catiline, — 'In this season of your alarm I have passed over many things in silence: I have made many concessions: I have undergone much: *I have healed many of the public maladies*, as it were *by my own sufferings*.' Again, 'If the consulship be granted me only on this condition, that I endure every kind of affliction, and pain, and even torture, I will bear them not only with fortitude but cheerfully, provided that *by my sufferings I may secure the dignity and salvation of yourselves and of Rome*.' How far is this language below Isaiah's: 'The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and by his stripes we are healed.'*

Josephus, an author of the same nation, and nearly of the same age, with the writers of the New Testament, uses language in relation to the fortitude shown by the Maccabees, under their tortures, and the benefits derived to Israel from their sufferings, which equals, if it does not transcend, the strongest expressions of substitution and expiatory suffering used by the sacred writers in speaking of our Lord. After his long account of their firmness and their death, under the tor-

* Isaiah liii. 5.

tures inflicted by command of Antiochus, he says: 'These men, therefore, having been sanctified of God, have attained this glory — (of standing by the throne of God and enjoying a happy eternity) — and not this glory only; but it was through them, having become, as it were, *the ransom of a sinful people*, that the enemies of our nation were defeated, the tyrant punished and the dishonor of our country wiped away:— and, *by the blood of these pious men*, and *the propitiation of their death*, Divine Providence effected the salvation of oppressed Israel.'* This last example of the figurative use of sacrificial language being from a Jewish writer, who is speaking of men that devoted themselves upon the altar of their religion and their country, is particularly illustrative of the language of other Jewish writers, when speaking of one who also devoted himself to dishonor and death for the benefit of his brethren; and who also, having been sanctified by the Father,† was, in consideration of this obedience unto death, highly exalted by him,‡ and crowned with glory and honor.§ But we need not go abroad for examples of the use of sacrificial language in relation to men and things, to the full as bold and as strong as the sacred writers use in relation to Christ. The sacred writers themselves, especially those of them who most frequently use this language in respect to Christ, use it not less frequently in connexion with other subjects; and that, too, without ever having been understood as speaking literally.

Does Peter say that '*Christ suffered for us?*'‖ He

* See Josephus 'De Maccabæis,' sec. 17.—See also 2 Maccab. vii. 37, 38. in the LXX.

† John x. 36. ‡ Phil. ii. 8, 9. § Heb. ii. 9. ‖ 1 Pet. ii. 21.

suffered in such a sense that '*we also may follow his steps.*' But, if he suffered as a literal sacrifice to God, as an expiation for sin, does it not follow that we must suffer for others as a sin offering — that the servants to whom these words are addressed, should suffer as a sacrifice to God for their master's sins? Did *Christ* '*become poor*, or live in poverty, *for our sake?*'* Paul, also, '*endured all things for the elects' sake*, that they also might obtain salvation.'† Can a stronger text be produced, from the New Testament, to prove that *Christ* was delivered to death *for our sake*, than this of Paul, to a very different purpose: 'For *we*, who live, *are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake.*' Did‡ Christ suffer *in our behalf*, or for *our sake?* Paul says to the Philippians, 'unto *you* it is given, *in behalf of Christ*, not only to believe in him, but *to suffer for his sake.*' Does he say to the Christians at Ephesus that 'Christ hath *given himself* for us *an offering* and *a sacrifice* to God?'§ To those at Rome ‖ he says, 'I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present *your bodies a living sacrifice*, holy, acceptable unto God.' To the Philippians he says, ¶ '*If I be offered upon the sacrifice* of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all:' and to Timothy he says, when he feels that his labors must soon close, 'I am now ready to be offered,' or more correctly, *I am already poured out as an offering.*** What is meant, by this language, but that the aged Apostle was exhausted, that he had worn himself out, in the discharge of the duties of the office to which he been called of God? Can we suppose

* 2 Cor. viii. 9. † 2 Tim. ii. 10. ‡ 2 Cor. iv. 2.
§ Eph. v. 2. ‖ Rom. xii. 1. ¶ Phil. ii. 17. ** 2 Tim. iv. 6.

that Paul considered himself as a literal sacrifice? that he presented himself, or besought the Roman Christians to present themselves to God, as a propitiatory offering? If not, why should we not give a metaphorical construction to similar, but not stronger language, in relation to Christ; who also fell a victim, — a nobler and a spotless victim,— to the cause that had been committed to him? Paul was the minister of Christ unto the Gentiles, that the *offering up of the Gentiles* might be acceptable, being sanctified by the same Holy Spirit.* Has Christ *given himself for us a sacrifice to God*, for *a sweet smelling savor?*† The charity which the Philippians sent by Epaphroditus to Paul, was *an odor of sweet smell, a sacrifice, acceptable, well pleasing unto God.*‡ Were the Gentiles offered as a literal sacrifice to God? Do we give a strict construction to that language which calls the charitable contributions of Christians to each other a sacrifice? If not, it *is* according to the usages of language, and especially of the language of the New Testament, to apply to persons and things indifferently, and in a figurative sense, the language which was strictly applicable to the proper sacrifices of the Mosaic law.

Inasmuch, then, as the sacrificial language of the New Testament when applied to all persons *may be*, and applied to all except Jesus *must* be, understood figuratively ; it certainly *may* be so understood when applied to him. And, inasmuch as a literal construction of that language in the several texts where he is the subject of discourse, would make those texts contradictory to other passages of scripture, to facts, and to

* Rom. xv. 16. † Eph. v. 2. ‡ Phil. iv. 18.

themselves, we conclude that the metaphorical sense *must* be adopted.

Or shall we, disregarding the opposition of these texts when literally construed to each other, to plain declarations of scripture, and to multiplied scriptural as well as other historical facts — shall we still insist upon construing them literally? and, giving up our reason and our faith to the consequences of such a construction, shall we believe, as the letter would compel us to believe, that our Lord was not only a real sacrifice, but every sort of sacrifice? — that he is now, a *federal* or testamentary sacrifice,* whose blood is to ratify a covenant; now, a *piacular* offering, whose blood is to make an atonement for sin;† and now, a *passover*, to commemorate our deliverance from sin and death? Shall we believe now, that he *was* offered,‡ and now that he offered up § or sacrificed ‖ *himself?* Shall we believe that he is now the offering, and now the priest who makes the offering?¶ If we are prepared to plunge into depths of belief like these, looking to the letter as the only guide of our faith, what shall restrain us from going on, and believing that Jesus is a *vine*,** and a *way*,†† and a *door*,‡‡ and a *corner-stone*;§§ and all this, at the same time that he is a *shepherd*, ‖‖ and a *lion*, ¶¶ and the bright and morning *star?**** Are we prepared to adopt a system of construing the scriptures

* Matt. xxvi. 28. Mark xiv. 24. Lu. xxii. 20. 1 Cor xi. 24.
† 1 Pet. ii. 24. 2 Cor. v. 21. Eph. v. 2.
‡ Heb. ix. 28.
§ Heb. ix. 14.
‖ Heb. ix. 26.
¶ Heb. ix. 11.
** John xv. 1.
†† John xiv. 6.
‡‡ John x. i. 7. 9.
§§ Eph. ii. 20. 1 Pet. ii. 6.
‖‖ John x. 11.
¶¶ Rev. v. 5.
*** Rev. ii. 28.

which shall lead us into such gross inconsistences? and shall we delude ourselves with the idea that these are the deep things of God? Shall we follow the letter, when it will compel us to believe that our Lord has assumed so many different forms, and that he acted and suffered in so many inconsistent characters, at the moment when, on the same principle, we are required to believe that Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, to-day, and forever?*

Shall we not rather believe that, in much of what the early disciples of Jesus said of him, they spoke, as all orientals speak, in a highly figurative style? Regarding him as the greatest of the prophets, and the most illustrious of the teachers who had come from God, was it wonderful that they should apply to him every title of dignity and glory? Recently converted, as they had been, from a religion abounding in sacrifices, was it not natural for them, especially when addressing those who had been educated in the same religion, to speak of their new faith in terms which had been familiar to them from their childhood. Admiring, as they did, the virtues of our Lord, and deeply affected, as they must have been, by the sufferings by which those virtues were called forth and proved; their feelings must have been excited, whenever he was the subject of their thoughts or their discourse, to more than their ordinary warmth, and to a neglect of the cold and studied correctness of the careful rhetorician. When they considered that their master had fallen a victim to his own fidelity, and to the envy of others, what

* Heb. xiii. 8.

was more natural than that they should speak of him as a sacrifice? — a sacrifice, now of one kind and now of another, according to their own circumstances at the time they were speaking, or to the other subjects of their discourse, or to the particular benefit which had resulted to the world from what he had done or suffered? When, either in prophetic vision, or in a rational anticipation of what must be effected by the religion of Jesus, they looked forward to the ultimate reformation of mankind — to the dispelling of the darkness of ignorance and sin from the face of the earth, what more natural than that they should call him 'the lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.' If the new covenant is sealed or ratified by his death, his is 'the blood of the covenant,' and the gospel itself, is 'the new covenant in his blood.' If an apostle is comparing the new converts to a mass of unleavened bread, this bread, being eaten at the passover, brings that festival to his mind; but Christ was crucified on the eve of the feast of unleavened bread; and then 'Christ is himself our passover who was sacrificed for us.'

The same kind of construction will guide us in other similar passages, and enable us to preserve, unimpeached, the best faculties of our nature, our reverence for the sacred oracles, and, above all, the adorable excellence of the divine character. It will enable us more correctly to understand the documents of our religion, more gratefully to rejoice in the light which they shed upon our path here, and upon our prospects hereafter, and more readily to convert to our spiritual nourishment and strength, the bread of life which came down from heaven in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

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THREE

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

ANSWERED,

RELATING TO THE

CHRISTIAN NAME, CHARACTER, AND HOPES.

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THREE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS ANSWERED.

It is my object, in these pages, to consider and attempt to answer the three following questions:

I. What is it to be a Christian?

II. How does a man become a Christian?

III. How shall a man satisfy himself that he is a Christian?

They are important questions, of very deep and serious personal interest. They deserve a careful consideration and solemn reply.

I What is it to be a Christian?

The word, *Christian*, is used in a particular and in a general sense. In a general sense, when we call those *Christians*, who dwell in a christian community, and partake of the privileges of the gospel. Every such man is so named in distinction from a Pagan, or one who lives in a pagan country. It is in this sense that we say any one is a Christian by birth.

Every man, also, who believes the scriptures, is a

Christian, in opposition to a Deist or Infidel, who does not believe the scriptures.

It is not concerning a Christian in either of these senses, that we are to inquire: but concerning him who is to be acknowledged as such, on account of the full influence of the gospel upon his own heart and character, and who, upon his own responsibility, independent of all other beings, is to receive a Christian's favor and happiness in the future world.

It is in this sense that the inquiry is so important to us. We are all of us Christians, if that mean, not to be Heathen. We are all of us Christians, I trust, in the sense of not being Infidels. But it is still a question, whether we are Christians in the special, saving sense of the word, so that we can appropriate to ourselves the promises of the gospel, and lay claim to its hope and peace? If not, we might as well be Pagans or infidels. It can avail us nothing to have the name, if we want the reality.

I say then, first of all, to be a Christian is precisely the same thing as to be a *Disciple of Jesus Christ.*

A *Disciple*, to speak in general terms, is one who acknowledges any one as his teacher, and faithfully follows his instructions. Thus, for example, those who chose Socrates or Plato for their teacher and lived according to their directions, imbibing, owning, and practising their system of philosophy, were called their *disciples*. Those who in like manner acknowledge and follow Mahomet as the prophet of God, are called his *disciples*. So the Jews were disciples of Moses; as some of them said to the man whom Jesus had healed, *thou art his disciple, but we are Moses's disciples*. And

to the same purpose we read, *the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.*

To be a disciple of Jesus Christ two things are necessary: to receive him as an Instructor, and to obey him as a Master.

1. To receive Christ as an instructor, to regard him as the teacher of our souls, at whose feet we are ready to sit as humble docile pupils, and receive without question whatever he may communicate respecting God, and his character and purposes. He that is thus eager and willing to learn of Jesus as God's appointed Teacher, or, which is the same thing, to take his religion from the New Testament, is so far a Christian. — And he has a perfect claim to the title, when, 2. he carries into practical effect those instructions, and faithfully conforms himself to them in heart, disposition, and conduct. This faith in him as a divine Teacher, and obedience to him as a Saviour, constitute a Christian.

Some, however, will step in here, and tell us that this is not sufficient. They will name a certain list of doctrines, which it is necessary to believe that Jesus taught; and declare, that no one is a Christian, who does not hold a certain specified form and number of religious articles. — Of such I ask, who told you so? Who has given you a right to say, that there is only one sect in all Christendom which contains true disciples? for in fact the assertion amounts to this. — Just as if it were not more well pleasing to our Lord, that one should come to him and learn of him with right dispositions and faithful endeavors, than that he should simply attain a correct set of abstract opinions. There is not a passage in the New Testament, which requires a com-

pletely unerring faith, before one can be numbered with the disciples of Christ. I can point to a multitude of passages which require a *life* without error; but I do not remember one which requires a *faith* without error. On the contrary, I recollect that we are told 'to receive the *weak* in faith;' and, what is more, to receive them without 'doubtful disputations.'* I recollect too, that while the Twelve were always acknowledged by their living Master as his disciples, they had many great errors of faith, even in respect to the nature of his kingdom. But when they were humble, sincere, diligent, learners, — they listened to him, and followed him, and placed all their confidence in him; and therefore, notwithstanding their errors, they were received by him. — It is plain, therefore, that no man is to be refused the name of Christian solely on account of the supposed imperfection of his faith. They that have drawn up their articles, and declare that all who do not conform to them are not Christians, are trying men by a wrong standard, — a standard, which their Master himself, by his conduct to his disciples, has discountenanced.

This point may be made perfectly clear at once, by appealing to every man's experience and plain common sense. You meet with a man, who, in all the relations of life in which he moves, is marked for his uprightness and integrity, his good dispositions, and general benevolence. He says very little, perhaps seldom says anything, about his religion; but withal is humble and distrustful of himself, mild and meek in his intercourse with men, punctual in his attendance on the wor-

* Romans xiv. 1.

ship and ordinances of God, and apparently diligent in the perusal of the scriptures, which he seems to reverence and love and live by. What do you say of this man? Do you not consider him a Christian? You have never heard him converse for half an hour on religious subjects; — you do not know anything of his opinions on any one of the great doctrines which have divided the church; — but you do not doubt that he is a Christian. Perhaps, well as you know him, you do not even know in what temple he worships, or with what church he communes; you have not thought to ask whether he be Methodist, or Quaker, or Episcopalian, or Baptist. But you do not doubt that he is a Christian. The evidence is stampt on every feature of his life; and you would as soon think of waiting for the anatomist to examine his body, before you would venture to call him a man, as you would wait to know his private opinions on controverted points, before you admit him to be a Christian. In such a case as this there is no dispute. All agree. All acknowledge Fenelon, and Lardner, and Doddridge, and Penn, and Wesley, to be Christians; and yet, on disputed topics, which some tell you is the standard, they all differed from each other as the four winds of heaven.

You meet with another man who presents a different aspect. He talks very often and very long about his religion; it is the favorite topic of his conversation, on which he dwells with earnestness and zeal, and condemns all who seem to be less zealous than himself. He lays urgent stress upon the peculiar doctrines which he has adopted; he proclaims their excellence, he argues for their truth, he is almost ready to suffer mar-

tyrdom in their defence; and they are the very doctrines which are declared to be *the essentials* to the Christian. But then at the same time you discover that there is something in him of religious ostentation and spiritual pride; he does not govern his passions, he indulges his appetites, is selfish, and exerts himself but little for the benefit of others; and is quite censorious and uncharitable in his judgments. — Now what do you say of such a man? Do you think that his merely holding that set of opinions, which is said to constitute a Christian, gives him a fair title to the christian name? Do you not at once judge, that his feelings, dispositions, and character are more than an offset to these opinions? Does not every one judge so?

I have stated these two cases strongly, because it is easiest thus to put the principle to the test. Upon such cases, and they are by no means imaginary, there can be no difference of opinion; and they prove, that it is perfectly absurd to pretend that any certain set of opinions, beyond an acknowledgment of the divine authority of Jesus Christ and his gospel, is essential to a Christian, or constitutes a Christian.

They prove to us further, — that he is a genuine Disciple, who, having patiently and humbly learned of Jesus whatever he teaches, and cast himself on his gospel for salvation, faithfully cultivates *his* spirit, and forms his character according to that teaching and his example.

This is a definition which cannot be set aside. This will hold good amidst all the opposition of zeal and bigotry. This, in all practical decisions, ever has been and ever must be appealed to, by the sober com-

mon sense and unanimous judgment of the whole christian world.

He may be more or less enlightened. He may be more or less an adept in subtilties of doctrine and mysteries of knowledge. He may see reason to hold the five points of one, or stronger reason to abide by the five hundred of another. But if he have, with a good and honest heart, gone to the word of Jesus himself, and imbibed his spirit, and brought forth the fruits of that spirit — *heretic* he may be, but he is still a Christian: and from the living grave of the Inquisition, or the flaming pile of Protestant persecution, his meek and lowly spirit shall ascend to a righteous Judge, and be acknowledged in the presence of angels Many, many, will appear on the right hand at the last day, whom human judgment would not suffer to live, because they were no Christians!

How important then is it for us to avoid the error of making our private opinions the standard by which to judge the claims of our fellow men! It is not the right standard by which to try *ourselves;* much less by which to try others. We cannot go beyond their general characters; and if their characters, under a charitable construction, are agreeable to the upright and devout spirit of the gospel, it is to the last degree arrogant and criminal in us to deny them the christian name. We may think their opinions erroneous, and say so, if we please; but to denounce them as not Christians, because it is *our opinion* that *their opinions* are erroneous — words cannot express the absurdity.

That we may the more fully understand the christian

character, let us go for a moment into detail, and notice some of the particulars of which it is composed.

1. First, then, the Christian is one who feels a deep and solemn interest in Religion, as a thing of the first importance to his happiness, and which is valuable to him above everything else. This religious concern lies, as it were, at the bottom of his character. It is not a feeling which excludes all interest in the world and the pursuits of life; for he attends to the cares of his present calling as faithfully as any man. But he does not think them, as others do, the only things worth attending to; he thinks religion more important and mixes it with all other things. It has the first and ruling place among his desires.

2. The next thing is his devotedness to the Holy Scriptures. He humbly and thankfully betakes himself to them, as containing a complete and merciful revelation from God of all that pertains to duty, happiness and eternity. Conscious of his own insufficiency, he casts himself upon the scriptures in all his anxieties about religion and his soul, acknowledging no other rule for his faith, and no other guide to his conduct.

3. Another thing which distinguishes him is his piety. Love to God is with him the first and great commandment, to which all the other affections submit, and from which all other duties flow. This regard to the Supreme Being, exhibited in love, trust, holy fear, and habitual obedience, is an essential trait in the Christian's character.

4. His regard to his Saviour is another trait. He thinks often of his holy Master, delighting to remember him and dwell upon his pure and beautiful character, and his wonderful love to man.

5. He is distinguished by his dispositions towards his fellow men. His Master has taught him to feel toward them and treat them as brethren. He therefore does unto them, as he would have them do unto him. He is kind, mild, patient, and forgiving, not easily provoked, not proud, not censorious, not oppressive. One of the great peculiarities of the gospel, lies in the meek and quiet spirit, which it inculcates and forms; in the graces of humility, purity, patience, meekness, forbearance, forgiveness, benevolence. It was these which gave such singular eminence to the character of Jesus Christ, and made it so lovely. It was these, which he required with particular earnestness in his disciples. It is these which the apostle Paul enumerates with a special distinctness as the *fruits of the Spirit*; 'love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance.' It was these, which our Lord singled out for a pointed benediction when he began his ministry, proclaiming, Blessed are the meek, the humble, the pure, the peaceable, the mourning, the persecuted. Dr Buchanan tells us, that when he visited the Syrian churches, he found that eminent Christians were distinguished among them as *Men of the Beatitudes*. A beautiful and expressive title! A Christian, then, is A MAN OF THE BEATITUDES. He walks in the gentleness of his Lord's example, in the benignity of his Master's spirit. Neither the fashions of the world, nor the opinions of men, nor the principles of society, nor the solicitations nor example of those around him, can move him from a determined adherence to these maxims of his Lord. For he is aware, that just so far as he departs from them, he is unworthy the name of his disciple.

6. That he may keep alive in his heart this distrust of himself, this sense of his unworthiness and humility of soul, this reverence for the scriptures, this devotedness to God, and these holy and benevolent dispositions; he is faithful in waiting on all the appointed means of grace and improvement. He slights not God's worship, neglects not his ordinances, and fails not to be constant and persevering in the private exercises of faith and piety. He does not regard them as the end and summit of all attainment, nor think them worthy of boasting; but they are necessary, he feels, to his life and growth in religion, and they afford his highest satisfactions.

These are some of the main particulars in which the disciple of Christ is distinguished; and we thus learn what it is to be a Christian.

I now come to the next inquiry.

II. How does a man become a Christian?

We shall arrive most satisfactorily at the answer to this inquiry, if we will go back to the infancy of his being, and trace him onward to his full stature in christian perfection.

When a human being is born into the world, it is an object of its Maker's complacency and love. Its soul is as yet unstained. It has done neither good nor evil. I do not say that it is an object of moral *approbation;* because one receives approbation only for what he has himself done. But if it have done no act of holy obedience to call for approbation, neither has it been guilty of sinful disobedience, to merit censure. It is just such as was fashioned by God — innocent, lovely: therefore an object of God's complacent, kind regard. And if

during infancy it be removed from earth, its unblemished spirit flies upward, and is welcomed with a smile to the bosom of its Father's eternal love.

It was in the spirit of such reflections as these, that the Son of God, when he had taken little children in his arms and blessed them, declared that of *such is the kingdom of Heaven*. He has thus encouraged us to look upon them as partakers of Divine favor; and has authorised us to believe and say, that every infant immortal, when first consigned to this state of discipline and preparation, is a member of the kingdom of Heaven. 'The smiles of early infancy are sweet in the eyes of Heaven's King; the death of early infancy is but the fading of a beautiful flower, that is to bloom afresh in the garden of Heaven's King; 'their angels do always behold the face of their Father in Heaven; and it is not his will that one of these little ones should perish.'

But it is still very evident, that spotless and lovely as the infant may be, it is yet no Christian. This implies, as we have seen, a knowledge of religion and a practice of actual goodness, of which its helpless age is incapable. How then shall the infant become a Christian?

I answer, in the first place, by instruction and education. He is *now* of the kingdom of Heaven; why should he ever leave it? As soon as his reason dawns, let him be taught the knowledge of God and his providence; as soon as his affections open, let them be fixed on the great and infinite source of excellence and happiness; let his earliest lessons be concerning the life and gospel of Jesus Christ, and his earliest steps be made to go in imitation of his example. May not this be done successfully, so that he shall inevitably and in-

controvertibly become a Christian? — He never quits the kingdom of Heaven of which he was originally a member, but, as soon as his moral powers begin their exercise, as soon as his moral accountableness commences, he chooses God for his Sovereign, Christ for his Master and Lord, his gospel for his guide, his example for his pattern, his faith and hope for his support, his heaven for his home; he clings to them, lives by them, and as he grows in stature, grows also in favor with God and man.

The world, blessed be God, has seen many who thus have joined themselves to the fellowship of Jesus, without the misery and anguish of a late repentance; who have devoted themselves to God from the cradle, and have trodden in no other path than that of purity and truth, so exhibiting the temper of their Master, that all have taken notice of them that they have been with Jesus.

And certainly it is not strange that it should be so. It is the object of life to form man's character for eternity. For this purpose he is exposed in various ways and to various trials. If some are overcome by these trials, it were to be expected that some also would not be overcome by them. When so many ways are open at the beginning of life, and so many choose evil ways, it is not strange that some should select the good way; — that some should follow Christ, when so many follow the world. While such numbers lose the simplicity, openness, humility and purity of their infant spirits, it cannot be thought surprising that some should retain them.

We do not mean by this that they are faultless, and never sin. By no means. Notwithstanding their good disposition, principles, and resolutions, they doubtless sin often and much. But so do all Christians. The

oldest, firmest, best, sin often and much. I have never heard of a Christian who was past sinning. The imperfection therefore of those who have become Christian by education, does not prove them to have no right to the name.

Many imagine it to be essential that a man be converted. But they seem not to consider the distinction between *conversion* and *repentance*. Every man must repent. But I do not see that it is possible for such a one as I have described to be converted, in the proper sense of that term. He doubtless has continual need of humility, and repentance for his remaining sinfulness; but so have those who have passed through the soundest and most satisfactory conversion. He may also, at some particular season, feel the sense of this, peculiarly burdensome and oppressive, — as I doubt not every religious man has had such a season. But in him I have described, it cannot be considered as the period of conversion. For such periods of humiliation and concern occur to the most established Christians. They do not prove that *they* were no Christians before; neither do they prove that *he* was none: they are not accounted times of regeneration in *them;* neither should they be in *him.*— To convert is to turn; to be converted is to be turned, — not partially, from one thing, opinion, or character to its opposite, but completely. Now from what would you turn him? The most remarkable thing about him is his uniform regard to God and the gospel. You would not turn him from that. *To* what would you turn him? To the faith of the gospel? to the love of God? to the imitation of Christ? to sobriety, purity, righteousness, true holiness, temperance, and charity? Why, these things he has kept from his youth up; they

have been the objects of his solicitude, and pains, and prayers, ever since he knew that he had a soul. You cannot turn him into what he is already; and how then can he be converted?*

*It may be thought that the verse Matt. xviii. 3. presents an objection to what is here offered. *Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.* But that it does not, is evident from the following considerations.

1. This verse strikingly corroborates my main position, that all are to be regarded as at first members of the kingdom of heaven; for, in order that one, who is not, may become so, he must go back to his childlike character.

2. It is probable that our Lord's meaning in this passage is limited, and not universal. He is rebuking the ambitious temper of his disciples, who desire to know *who is greatest*. His reproof we may suppose confined to his temper, *except ye be turned from this disposition*, and become as little children: — which is made still more evident from the next verse — 'whosoever therefore, shall *humble himself*, as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.'

3. If we suppose the expression applicable to all others in a general sense, we must observe, that it only states what is necessary to those who are not already Christians; they must return to the character of childhood. But it leaves us at full liberty to understand, that those who have kept that character cannot be included, because they cannot go back.

4. If from this, or other passages, it be inferred that conversion was essential to all in the first age of the gospel; this will not prove that it is essential now. Because it was the only possible mode of attaining the Christian character *then*, but *now* there is another; for the gospel now is offered to the youngest children.

5. The christian character is a certain state of heart and life. The evidence of its existence, in any case, is to be found not in a certain process of formation, but in the actual state of the man. One may be a Christian, though utterly unable to describe the means by which he became so. And if he be already, all that conversion is intended to make him, conversion is clearly unneces-

We may be satisfied then, that some men become Christians by education. They never go out from the kingdom of God; but in spite of temptations, and frequent wanderings, and many stains of unworthiness, they are, at heart and in principle, God's servants and children. They grow up Christians.

But there is still a large class of men who have not thus attached themselves to religion, and who, if they ever become Christians, must become so in later life. Instead of taking the gospel for their guide, they have chosen some other leader; and under the control of appetite and passion, or worldly principle, they have left the kingdom of God, thrown off his allegiance, and followed the devices of their own hearts, without regard to his authority or revelation. There are many such in the world; and the question occurs, how shall they become Christians?

There can be but one answer to this question and that in one word: *By Conversion.*

To these men may be applied the description, which

say. The question is, *What is he;* not *Through what scenes has he been passing.*

6. The only solid foundation for the doctrine which this text is thought to support, is the supposition that every one inherits a thoroughly depraved nature, which lies under an eternal curse, and which can be made better only by a *literal* new creation, to which the power of God alone is adequate. This of course renders a supernatural regeneration necessary. These two doctrines stand and fall together. The one is an unavoidable consequence of the other. Those who maintain different views of the nature which man has received from God, are not bound to receive a tenet, which stands on no ground but that of total depravity; a tenet, which is essential to Calvinism, but not to Christianity

the Apostle gives of the gentile state of the Ephesians; dead in trespasses and sins; without Christ; having no hope, and without God in the world; alienated from the life of God, and ignorant of heavenly things through the blindness of their hearts. So far as this description is applicable to them, they also, like the Ephesians, must put off the old and corrupt man, and be renewed in the spirit of their minds and put on the new man, who after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. This is conversion; and nothing short of this can be rightly called conversion. The bad man must become good; the sinful, holy; the irreligious, religious; the thoughtless and worldly who have lived only for present good, must give their thoughts to God, and live for eternity, — must renew the spirit of their minds, as well as the corruption of the outward man.

Upon this point, I am fearful that we do not think and insist sufficiently. Many, indeed, have a settled dislike to all language of this sort; and when you speak to them of conversion or regeneration, they at once suspect you of fanaticism, and shut their ears to all that can be said. Undoubtedly a great deal of madness and mischief has been practised in the world, under shelter of these names, and the sober part of mankind have become disgusted at the extravagancies which they have sanctioned. But certainly it cannot be wise to throw away a doctrine, because some have abused it. For the best doctrines have been perverted and abused. The simple question is, what must be done with those men, who have passed from infancy to age, careless of their souls, and guided by no religious principles? How are such to become Christians, except by conversion or regeneration, or — I am not solicitous about the

name, call it what you please — without a change of their dispositions, principles, and habits? If you will tell me how, I will urge the matter no further. If you tell me of any method by which a man, selfish, sensual, worldly, ambitious, proud, vicious, impious, can become humble, meek, spiritual, righteous and devout, without a change of his dispositions, without being renewed in the spirit of his mind, — then I will give up the point at once. It is clear as the shadow on the dial, that it is impossible. And I fear that we suffer ourselves to think of it too little. We suffer men to grow up in bad habits, their affections devoted to present objects, making an idol of sensual good, and forgetful of their accountableness at last; and then we hope that they will become fit for heaven very easily, will enter on the way of truth, holiness, and salvation, without doing any great violence to their former partialities, or greatly sacrificing their favorite desires. But is not this preposterous? Can there be conceived a greater change than that which they need? — a change, of the very object of life, of the very principles of conduct, and of the prevalent dispositions of the soul. It is impossible that this should not be a great work; and important as it is great; and we wrong our fellow men, if we suffer them to imagine it small and easy and of little consequence. Words cannot express the importance of the christian character; and we cannot say too much of the importance of that change, which is necessary to produce it where it does not exist.

The unwillingnes of many to believe that conversion, or regeneration, is necessary to any man, has principally, perhaps wholly, arisen from the injudicious and irrational manner, in which the doctrine is oftentimes stated

and defended. They have heard it declared, that man is entirely incapable of doing anything in it by his own exertions, and that it is wholly, in its commencement, progress and completion, the arbitrary and sovereign work of God's spirit, whose influences he imparts or withholds at his pleasure. This statement has appeared to them to take away the guilt of the unconverted, and to destroy the doctrine of accountableness; while, laying great stress upon ardent, rapturous, indefinable, feelings, it has invited and encouraged fanaticism, and cherished spiritual pride by the belief that they were all the result of God's special and distinguishing love. But the objections of a rational mind to *this* doctrine of regeneration, are wholly inapplicable to that which I am contending for, as the doctrine of the Gospel. I speak of nothing arbitrary, mysterious, or fanatical; but of a change in dispositions, affections, and character, to which any man is competent in the use of his natural powers, assisted by the means which the religion of Christ puts within his reach, and by those Divine influences which are bestowed upon all who need. With the knowledge and faith of the gospel, it is in the power of any man to turn to God, *the spirit helping his infirmities.* If the sinner would attain the christian character and hope, he must diligently set himself to *work out his own salvation with fear and trembling.* It is then that *God will work in him to will and to do, of his good pleasure.* Without this diligence, the influences of the spirit are as useless, as the sunshine and rain of heaven are to him who leaves his field, uncultivated, to run to waste.

We have thus learned in answer to our inquiry, that the sincere and true disciples of Jesus Christ are some

of them formed by a gradual growth in the regular education and discipline of life; while others are brought out from amidst a vicious world by a change in their views, feelings, dispositions, and principles of action, not different in kind though less in degree, from that by which heathen sinners were originally called to the Church.

III. Our third question is, HOW SHALL A MAN SATISFY HIMSELF THAT HE IS A CHRISTIAN?

There are many tests of christian standing presented in the New Testament, differing according to the circumstances of those to whom they are applied, which it might be useful to every one to collect and accommodate to his own case. But there is none so often repeated, and with so much emphasis, as that of *obedience*. *Ye are my friends*, said our Lord, IF YE DO WHATSOEVER I COMMAND YOU. This saying of Jesus is the more deserving our regard, because it was solemnly uttered during his last interview with his disciples on the night before he suffered, and he evinced his sense of its importance by repeating it, though in a varied form, not less than five several times.* If it were a sure and sufficient test for his disciples at that time, it must be so for all others.

It is true, that on the same occasion he told them, 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have *love one to another*.' To the same purpose the Apostle John, By this do we know that we have passed from death unto life, because *we love the brethren*. These passages would seem to imply, that the sure test of christian standing is brotherly love. But brotherly love is *one of the commandments* of Christ, even his new

* See John xiv. 15. 21, 23, 24, and v. 8, 14.

and special commandment. It is therefore included in the text which I quoted; and this is better as a universal guide, because more comprehensive, comprising every other rule or guide which might be selected or named. It coincides also with the whole spirit and purpose of the New Testament, and with the most frequently repeated declarations both of our Saviour and the Apostles. When the young Ruler inquired, Good master, what shall I do that I may have eternal life; — our Lord's answer was, *Keep the commandments*. When told that his mother and brethren desired to see him, he replied, Who is my mother, or my brethren? Whosoever shall *do the will of God*, the same is my sister and brother and mother. He declared, that the man *who heareth and doeth his sayings*, is like him who builds his house upon a rock, which nothing can overthrow; and that it is he only who *doeth the will* of his Father, who shall enter the kingdom of Heaven. To the same purpose the apostle Paul; not the *hearers* of the law, but the *doers* of it shall be justified. And again, he says, that eternal life is promised to those who seek it by *patient continuance in well doing*. Passages of this import might be greatly multiplied, which would prove that the test I have selected is but the echo of the universal doctrine of the gospel.

It recommends itself also by its *simplicity and easy application*, as well as by the stress laid upon it by our Lord and the Apostles. In the work of self-examination it directs the mind at once. It leaves no room for shuffling or evasion, but presents a direct, *home* question. We can be at no loss how to put it, or how to ascertain the reply. It is on a point which admits of evidence, clear, distinct, positive, undeniable evidence. There is

no escaping by means of the obscurity of the thing inquired for, through any vagueness or equivocation. But *Have I kept the commandments, do I do whatsoever I am commanded*, are questions so intelligible, plain and pointed, that we are compelled to see their meaning and feel the reply.

In all these respects, how greatly has this an advantage over other tests, which are sometimes used for determining our christian standing. If it be certain *doctrines*; we could not be certain, amidst the unavoidable differences of those who even most nearly agree, that we hold them in the right sense, or that they were attained with sufficient fairness of inquiry, or are accompanied by all their right consequences. If it be certain *feelings*; they are something which we cannot define, or express in words, or measure by any determinate standard, and which may be mixed with a thousand undetected imperfections. If it be certain *ceremonies* or *observances*, or a *comparison* of ourselves with other men, or any past *experience* of religion; it is obvious that they are all very fallacious and uncertain, and leave never-failing room for doubt, uneasiness, and apprehension.

But when we come to the test of *keeping the commandments*, all is clear, settled, and unambiguous. It is only to know what they are, which is easily known, and the question is answered as soon as it is asked. Any man who looks at his life and character, can tell whether he have kept the commandments or not. Nothing but the most criminal carelessness and unfaithfulness can prevent his discovering it.

It should be considered too, that this is the only test which is at all difficult, or amounts to an actual trial. External homage, of whatever sort, is easy. The hypo-

crite can give it. Inflamed zeal may be superficial, or constitutional, or unsanctified passion. Modes of faith may be, and most commonly are, the mechanical result of education or circumstances. They are given a man by his parents and teachers, not by his own efforts or by the scriptures. There are very few of whom it is not evident, that if educated in a different way and with other companions, they would have held a different faith. These things, therefore, leave uncertain the real state and character of a man. But *obedience* is by his own personal effort and trial; oftentimes demanding severe and toilsome labor, and requiring occasional sacrifices and privations, which demonstrate his sincerity, and the strength of his principle, and put beyond question the submission of his soul to God. There can be no doubt concerning the man whose obedience is uniform and universal.

Besides; this rule of our Lord, short as it is, is far more comprehensive than any other. It comprises everything. It omits nothing. — Not a question concerning christian character or duty can arise, which this does not embrace. — And here it is important to prevent misapprehension. When we say that a Christian is known by his *keeping the commandments*, — there are many ready to object to the assertion, and say that the standard is altogether insufficient; that is going no deeper than the outside; that is neglecting internal principle and purity; for that the commandments may be kept from worldly motives, by a man who possesses nothing of christian spirituality.

But this objection appears to be wholly founded in mistake. We consider, that the internal principle is as much a *part* of the commandment, as the outward ac-

tion and that no man keeps the commandments of the gospel, who observes only their external acquirements. It were absurd to imagine otherwise, because one of the chief and most distinguishing commands is, that the heart be pure and the motive good Impurity of heart, or a bad motive, breaks the command just as much as murder, or fraud, or false witness. It is a very erroneous notion, therefore, that the 'commandments' only relate to external conduct. There are commandments for faith, repentance, humility, heavenly-mindedness, spiritual-mindedness, and every holy thought and exalted spiritual exercise. Every christian feeling, desire, and disposition are as much comprehended in them, as sobriety of deportment, and honesty in dealings. They are all, consequently, comprised in that test of christian standing which I have named and recommended. The question, there, is not, have you done *part* of what I commanded; but have you done *whatsoever* I commanded. Not, have you observed the rules which concern external morals, but have you observed *all* the rules of Christ's gospel; — and surely you would not think of omitting among these, those rules respecting the inner man, and the conduct and discipline of the soul, which are in fact the most peculiar and positive of the whole.

So that the expression is not so confined and limited as might be supposed; but perhaps is as extensive as could be chosen. It sets us, in one word, upon inquiry, not only concerning our duties to man, but to God; not only concerning our actions, but our principles and motives; not only concerning the decent regularity of our deportment, but the spiritual state and exercises of our mind.

Thus when we find an answer to the question we were asking, How shall a man know that he is a Christian? — He may know it, by finding that *he does whatsoever his Lord commands him.* Let him studiously and faithfully look at himself, and inquire how far his dispositions, feelings, tastes, principles and mode of life, are regulated by the requirements and spirit of the gospel. Let him examine how far the love of God reigns within him; how far the love of his neighbor directs his conduct toward him; how far he maintains a proper watch and government and control over his passions, propensities, and desires; particularly, how far he possesses that peculiar spirit of benevolence, meekness, forbearance and humility, which so distinguished the character of his Lord and Master. He may be sure, that so far as in these things he goes according to the commands of Christ, just so far he is a Christian; and so far as he is deficient in any of these, just so far he is no Christian.

I am confidently persuaded, that every other test than this, is deceitful and inadequate. We may judge ourselves by any other standard, and only be led astray. But if we try ourselves by this, we cannot fail to know ourselves, except we be wilfully blind. When we find that *we have the dispositions and character of disciples,* we may be satisfied that we *are* disciples; but without them, all faith, and knowledge, and zeal, afford not the smallest satisfaction under heaven. This is no question of certain opinions, and doctrines, and forms, and observances, but of spirit and holiness: — *if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his: — without holiness no man shall see the Lord.* Neither is it a question by what process we obtained this character, or whether we can remember its commencement, and detail its pro-

gress. The only important question is, Do we possess it? Every other inquiry is swallowed up in this. For we might repeat the truest stories of once experienced raptures, and remove mountains by our faith, and overcome kingdoms by our zeal; and yet, if we be not 'formed after God, in righteousness and true holiness,' we should be much nearer the school of the Pharisees than that of Christ.

In regard to this subject, we have a most important and solemn duty of self-examination; an examination, which relates to nothing less than our personal claims to share the name of Christ, and the hope and prospect of our souls for eternity. Of all questions which can come before us, there is none to be compared to this in deep and awful interest; none, which it is of any consequence, comparatively speaking, that we should be in haste to settle. Let us, then, put away, for a moment, all indifference and levity, and try ourselves by the standard of Christ, and ascertain whether we be truly his disciples. The question is not whether we believe the Bible, whether we are Pagans, or Infidels. The answer to this is easy, and we are too ready to be satisfied with it. But it relates to our personal claims to the hopes and promises of the gospel. 'There are,' says a certain writer,* 'two sorts of Christianity; the one opposed to infidelity, the other opposed to worldly mindedness.' Suppose that we have the first, and hate infidelity; yet what will that avail us, if we have not also the second, and hate worldly-mindedness? Of what use to put the Bible under our arm, and walk forward in the way of sin? Of what use to possess the

* H. More's *Practical Piety.*

candle of the gospel, and boast of it, and yet put it under a bushel, and go about our deeds of darkness?

Upon this subject it is necessary to come home to ourselves, and meet the interrogation openly and fairly. it is simply, *Are we Christians* — not, were we born in a Christian land, and baptized in a Christian church, and can we repeat a Christian creed; not, have we the Bible in our houses, and do we attend public worship on the Sabbath. Let us not suffer ourselves to be led away by any such evasions. But *Are we* CHRISTIANS — in deed and in truth, at heart, in spirit, thoroughly, earnestly? Do we receive from the scriptures of Jesus their holy teachings, and faithfully follow them in life, conversation and temper?

It can avail us nothing to temporize in this matter, and strive to stifle the conviction of our deficiencies. The state of things will not be changed by our refusing to see what it is. Better far that the inquiry should disturb us now, than that we should go sluggishly on, satisfied with our general standing and general name, till it is too late to recover ourselves. Let us then be honest, and know the truth. It can profit us nothing to have a name to live, while we are yet dead; to walk with the followers of Christ, and yet not be numbered with his friends. This is the most dreadful of all delusions, —the more dreadful, because voluntary. God grant, therefore, that by a timely knowledge of ourselves on earth, we may escape the shame and horror, at the last day, of seeing ourselves in our true characters for the first time; and of discovering, that although we have been all our lives long crying out, 'Lord, Lord,' — yet we must be rejected as strangers, because *we have not done the will of our Father who is in Heaven.*

1st Series. No. 83.

MR. BARNARD'S

SECOND REPORT

OF

HIS SERVICE,

AS A

MINISTER AT LARGE IN BOSTON.

PRINTED FOR THE

American Unitarian Association.

BOSTON:

CHARLES BOWEN, 141 WASHINGTON STREET.

May, 1834.

Price 3 *Cents.*

PRINTED BY I. R. BUTTS, BOSTON.

REPORT.

To the Executive Committee of the

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

GENTLEMEN, — Permit us to lay before you the details of our mission during the last six months.

The office, opened in the fall, has been continued to the present date, and we are happy to be able to state that it has fully answered our expectations.

The large number of applicants that have been brought under our notice among [illegible] to approach somewhat nearer to [illegible] the extent and character of that [illegible] population.

Many of the cases referred to us have shown so clearly the necessity of caution and judgment in exercising true benevolence, that we [illegible] in having been permitted thus to learn the lesson. The past months have been full of instruction. They have laid before us the facts, and revealed to our experience the principles, upon which the practice of charity ought always to proceed.

It is true that a great amount of labor — and much of it of an unpleasant kind — has been devolved upon

us; but we met with such daily proofs of the excellence of the measure, that little reflection and slight strength of purpose alone were needed to carry us through. Besides, we had availed ourselves of a movement of the happiest influence, which cheered while it strengthened us.

In October we invited all the other Ministers at large, in the city, to consult with us upon the expediency and practicability of a union of our efforts, so far as related to the temporal and moral wants of the poor. The proposed co-operation met their approval. Rev. Mr Collier reported at the second meeting a plan of concert, that has been adhered to through the winter; and he, with Rev. Dr Eaton, Rev. Messrs Rossetter, Cleveland, Barbour, Cushing, Gooch, Grew, and Green, have met with us at our office each fortnight. We have discussed together the objects of our care; we have communicated to each other the results of our individual experience and observation. In this way our meetings have proved the source of valuable information to all.

At the same time, we endeavored to secure a better distribution of assistance to the poor, by confining ourselves each to a particular district of the city. The division of labor was in itself an important point; and the whole work thus fell to so many hands as to be greatly lightened for those engaged in bearing it.

Allow us here to thank our associates and brethren for the zeal and interest they have displayed in promoting the success of these measures. We rejoice with them in the hope that the fruits of the past winter's experience will never be lost. From the good effects

of union and coöperation in our own case, we have been convinced that a similar concert and organization would be of the highest service, if adopted by the various benevolent societies of our community.

It was with a view to such an extended union, and in the desire to exempt ourselves, as Missionaries, mainly from the care of the temporal wants of the poor, that a Committee was appointed, to invite the various Benevolent Associations of the city to send delegates to a meeting at our office.

The Societies, almost without exception, very cheerfully complied with the request. Several meetings have been held. A report upon the contemplated union has been offered and accepted. It has been printed at the request of the delegates, in order that the members of each Society may have an opportunity to take it into careful consideration; — and two plans have been annexed to it, one of which, it is hoped, will meet with general acceptance.

We would refer all who are interested in the subject to the report, and its plans, — confident that nothing need be added by us to show the great value of the measures proposed therein.

It is highly important that the several Societies should be left so far independent of each other as not to prevent their doing all the good, in the way of relief, which they have done in times past. No one should be merged in any other. We surely need among our poor all the assistance which the independent action of these Societies has hitherto afforded: and yet, it is believed that a degree of union and coöperation would result, from the adoption of either of the plans brought

forward in the report, that would greatly enhance the good effected by all. Mutual information, touching each other's operations, would be afforded. A desired check would be placed upon imposture and ill-desert. Harmony of purposes and views would follow, to enlighten and elevate all engaged in the mutual and high office of relieving human distress. We look forward with pleasing anticipation to the action of the several Societies upon this matter. We have been happy to trace the good effects that have thus early followed the meetings of their representatives. We cannot but hope that other and greater results may be allowed to take place. A little further experience, a little closer union and more perfect organization, will prove the best of all recommendations, and cannot but lead to the happiest issue. All will then be secured that is needed to complete the success of the Benevolent Associations of our city.

Should further steps be taken on this ground, by the Societies, the Ministers at large will be more free to pursue those objects of a moral and spiritual nature to which their labors ought primarily, if not exclusively, to be devoted.

The friends of our Mission are aware, that a large portion of our time and attention has long been given to the worldly necessities of the poor. This, in part, has been unavoidable. We were brought into close and daily contact with those who, whatever wants they had beyond, were certainly destitute of much that we could supply — much that must be supplied, indeed, before attention could be secured to the means of higher and holier relief.

Besides, we were willing and even desirous to take upon ourselves the supply of temporal wants, that we might gather from personal experience the true principles of such charity, and trace, through our own observation, the operation and effect of the various forms of public and private benevolence. Such observation and experience, we need hardly say, are still far from complete. However full and valuable the instruction to which Providence has led us, we feel that the future has much to unfold.

Whoever has given his attention to the character, situation, wants and claims of the dependent portions of his fellow-creatures, must have early felt his own ignorance, and learned soon to prize the instruction such studies afford. There is so much that is wrong, unwise, and sinful — there is so much to be lamented over, and so much to be amended — there are such paltry principles acted upon, and such poor schemes in operation — there is with the rich and the poor, in all their intercourse, such a departure from the will of the Heavenly Father, that the subject of pauperism alone is worth the study and devotion of a life. We never shall regret that we have been called to pursue it as far as we have.

But the time seems now to have arrived when the Ministers at large can devolve on societies and others the supply of whatever temporal necessities come under their notice. The number of Benevolent Associations has greatly increased of late; — that of individuals, who are willing to take charge of one or more poor families, has increased also. These, together with the public means of relief, acting with a slight degree of concert and system, will be amply sufficient to meet all future demands.

Directing those we find in want to the Overseers of the Poor, the Officers of Benevolent Societies, or to private individuals, as circumstances shall dictate, let it be our duty to visit the sick and dying, to cheer the mourner, to plead with the impenitent, and to minister to the necessities of the souls of those we visit. Enough surely has been said to satisfy all, that 'there are in our city thousands, many thousands of our fellow-creatures, who are destitute of the instructions and benefits of religion. Living in the midst of christian institutions and influences, they are, in fact, strangers to them. They have no place of worship, no religious teacher, no christian friend, no sacred associations. Their moral sentiments are not cultivated, their spiritual natures are bound in darkness and torpor. They do not know themselves; they do not know the Saviour, who died to raise such as they to a new life; they do not know the Heavenly Father, whose sunshine is on their daily paths, and whose mercy is waiting to be gracious to their souls.' It is to these, and to the supply of the great wants of these, that we would devote ourselves. None of them 'are unsusceptible of influence; they may be addressed, reclaimed, enlightened, sanctified, and made happy Christians.' We believe this on the authority of our Master's religion — we know it to be true on the ground of experience; and while we bless God for the good that has already been gained, we cannot but look forward with the liveliest hope to that wider and better influence which must follow our labors when more strictly confined to the spiritual and religious nature of the beings we are to address.

We have hitherto learned, in our connection with the

poor, much that will aid and guide us in our future exertions to confer upon them the highest benefits. It has been a painful part of our experience to witness, in many cases, the demoralizing tendency of much of the benevolent action of our community.

The most direct and obvious way to supply the wants of the poor, is to give them money, or the articles they need. The pressure of their wants, and the necessity of immediate relief, often suggest and warrant such steps. Assistance, thus promptly rendered to the destitute, is an essential and pleasing feature of true charity. No friend to the rich or the poor would ever see this changed. Let distress and suffering, when they come to the home or the bosom of our brother, be met with open and ready benevolence. We then shall work together with God. We then shall lighten our brother's burdens, according to his will. We then shall receive and improve the lessons and discipline of life.

But, if direct modes of supplying wants, instead of being casual and confined to occasional exigencies, are permitted to become habitual and even of uninterrupted continuance, must not great evils be expected to follow? Assistance then becomes regular, it ceases to awaken gratitude; it can be calculated upon; it takes the place of prudence, foresight, and economy; and through such approaches must it not undermine the excellence and dignity of human character? What is there, in the Providence of the Heavenly Father, that authorises such perverted forms of benevolence to his children? He hath created man to depend upon his own exertions, for such wise and clear purposes of good that every departure from such dependence,

unless absolutely unavoidable, should awaken distrust and apprehension. It is not safe for human beings to look for the supply of their wants to the gratuitous bounty of others. If it be possible, it is certainly better for all of us to meet our own necessities with our own means. Free, unconditional, uninterrupted assistance has been offered to the poor of England, till millions have been expended, and the prospect opened that millions more will be required. And the case is very much the same in this country, both as relates to public and private charity. We have spent our millions also.

It would be a happy thing if the loss of money were all that we had to regret. Energy of character has been cramped — a bounty has been set upon idleness — unwise and needless temptations have been offered, and too little regard has been paid to the means of protecting and promoting the virtue and peace of the poor. The causes of pauperism have been overlooked; relief has too often been so applied as to multiply and enlarge them; and where the causes have been thus circumstanced, we all know how it must have been with the effect.

Let us hope for a wiser mode of benevolence for the future. Let us learn that by encouraging habits of prudence, industry and economy we may often both relieve the wants and elevate the characters of our fellow-creatures — thus conferring more than double benefit upon them. A proper degree of self-respect, a reasonable love of independence, and a cheerful and true submission to the will of Divine Providence, will be better gifts than silver or gold. Let it be our en-

deavor to improve the condition of the poor, by educating their minds and morals, — by opening new fields to their exertions, — by revealing to them their hidden energies and talents, and we shall prove ourselves indeed their friends. To exercise worthy benevolence we must remember the whole nature, and call before us all the wants, of our dependent brother. He is not merely a creature of this world, with bodily infirmities and temporal necessities to be met and supplied; — he is born for higher ends and a nobler existence; he carries with him even here, and under all his trials, a better part, with wants and claims of its own, that should form the basis of our whole intercourse with him. Charity should be given freely; but its necessity should first be learned by strict inquiry; it should result from accurate knowledge of those who ask for it; and its effect upon them should always be watched with close and jealous vigilance.

It is true that such a course will demand more attention, more labor, a greater degree of wisdom and reflection, and altogether a wider view and deeper love of duty than are common with us. But let it never be forgotten that to do good, while it is one of the happiest and highest, is also one of the most difficult of human employments. Benevolence must act only under the guidance of enlightened intellect, correct observation and well grounded experience, or it will fail to accomplish the great purposes of its Creator. In this way, and in this way alone, is its exercise designed to be a blessed and glorious privilege of humanity. We must not give way to the impulse of the moment and the excitement of our feelings, in administering to the

necessities of our fellow-creatures, more than in performing any other of the highest duties of life. Let us learn, then, to distrust ourselves; let us lean upon each other for support; let us avail ourselves of the opinions, judgment, and experience of all, and thus open the way for improvement in our charities for the future.

The meetings, that have been noticed above, may here be made of essential service; and it certainly would be well that they should continue to be attended, not only by the representatives of those who contribute directly to the supply of the wants of the poor, but also by the directors of Infant Schools, the officers of Societies for providing employment, and all who have opportunities of witnessing, or improving in any way, the effects of our charitable measures. Discussions might then ensue of the highest value; reports might be made, drawn from the widest survey of the several branches of benevolence, and light afforded upon the whole subject, such as individual exertion could never hope to attain. Ground, too, would then be afforded for bringing forward and adopting all plans of a general character, that shall seem calculated to lead to good results. Many such plans have no doubt occurred to all engaged in administering to the wants of the poor, which they have been obliged to abandon, for the plain and simple reason that they could not have carried them on, with any success, without the sympathy and coöperation of all engaged in similar works of charity and relief. It is hoped that the union of the Benevolent Societies, the coming summer, may facilitate the adoption of measures which have hitherto wanted nothing to recommend them but the possibility of putting them in

execution. The earliest opportunity will be taken to bring some of them before the delegates, and to procure the action of the societies upon them.

Permit us to turn now from this branch of our labors to those more peculiarly deserving our attention.

The services at the Friend Street chapel have been continued the same as mentioned in the last report; and in this part of our labors we have been highly blessed. The evening service each Sabbath has been fully attended, and has presented a most happy spectacle. There are over 200 children connected with the Sunday School, 160 to 170 of whom generally attend, who are instructed by 38 Teachers, with two Superintendents, whose interest and fidelity to those committed to their care during the past winter, deserve great commendation. Aware of the importance of the religious instruction there given, — instruction which most of the recipients would receive no where else, — they have been untiring in their exertions to interest and engage their pupils in holy things. Their efforts have been crowned with success, as is quite apparent in the good order and attention that prevails in the school, and the punctuality and pleasure with which the children attend. The valuable assistance rendered by the Superintendents and Teachers of this school to the Ministers at large, we cannot but acknowledge with gratitude. It encourages us to persevere with them in efforts to promote the happiness and moral welfare of our less favored brethren.

The morning service for the children, which was commenced as an experiment, has far surpassed the expectations of those who proposed it. The attend-

ance, which at first did not exceed 40 or 50 children, has greatly increased; and there are now, generally, from 150 to 200 present. A more interesting sight is seldom presented than this little audience, when engaged in the services of that hour.

So pressing have been our calls at the office, together with the time it has necessarily taken to effect a union of the several Ministers at large and the various Benevolent Societies in this city, that we have been able to give our attention only on the Sabbath to this part of our work. A great field for usefulness is here presented to us, and by what has been done we are convinced that a still greater amount of good may yet be effected, by pointing out to the young the way in which they should go, and by leading those, who are wandering in the paths of ignorance and vice, to a knowledge of that which alone will advance their happiness here and hereafter. Encouraged by the past, we shall spare no effort, therefore, that will promote the great object of this school and chapel, not doubting that He, who has thus far blessed us in our feeble efforts, will strengthen and prepare us for every duty that shall present itself in the great field we are entering.

Dr Tuckerman's absence, and Mr Gray's feeble health the two months past, with the many engagements of the winter, have obliged us still to defer opening a chapel at the South End. Those we visit in that part of the city have expressed strong desires to have a place of worship provided for them; and it is hoped that their wishes may be complied with before long. Our experience at Friend Street is, in the meantime, affording us valuable suggestions and preparation for future and similar measures elsewhere.

The Sunday School in Hollis Street has been very full the last six months, presenting, at times, an attendance of 226 children. It continues to give promise of leading to highly important results, and of forming, hereafter, the central point of wide and beneficial influence. It still gathers in its classes the rich and the poor together. It has been, and we trust it always will be, most sacredly devoted to the cause of christian truth and love, the promotion of active benevolence, the diffusion of peace and good will among all who are made the subjects of its sway.

We look forward with pleasing anticipation to our future connection with the poor, as their religious teachers and Christian pastors. It is our earnest prayer that God will long continue us in the discharge of such high and holy offices to man. Permit us to express to your Board our thanks for the care and interest you have long shown towards the great mission to which we have been called; and to rejoice with you in the prospect that such care and interest will pass from your body only to descend and expand itself through the whole class of our fellow-christians. Whatever honor and success shall crown the Ministry at large in future years, the praise must ever rest with you of having laid the foundations of all.

Our friends will be pleased to hear that Dr Tuckerman's health continues to improve in Europe. His return may now soon be expected. Rev. Mr Arnold meets with success in his kindred mission in New York. His first semi-annual report is full of interest. He has 'procured a hall for public worship, and a Sunday School, which he hopes will prove useful auxiliaries to his other labors.'

Allow us, through our communication with you, to thank our many known and unknown friends for the assistance they have rendered us. Some gifts have reached us that awakened deep gratitude to our Heavenly Father, and gave us a happy pledge of the sympathy and support we shall always so much need. The Ladies of 'The Sewing circle' have each month rendered us very important aid. Our engagements the past winter having brought a great extent of suffering beneath our notice, and having led us, besides supplying those immediately under our own care, to aid the resources of our associates, in assisting many of the applicants in their districts also, our Poor's Purse account is necessarily at present somewhat in arrears.

Respectfully,

CHARLES F. BARNARD,
FREDERICK T. GRAY.

MAY 9, 1834.

1st Series. No. 84.

THE

NINTH REPORT

OF THE AMERICAN

UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

WITH THE

PROCEEDINGS

OF

THE ANNUAL MEETING,

MAY 27, 1834.

BOSTON:

CHARLES BOWEN, 141 WASHINGTON STREET.

JUNE, 1834.

Price 6 Cents.

PRINTED BY I. R. BUTTS, BOSTON.

NINTH ANNIVERSARY.

The American Unitarian Association celebrated its ninth anniversary on the evening of Tuesday, May 27, 1834. The members met for the transaction of business at half past six o'clock, in the Berry-street Vestry. Hon. Joseph Story, first Vice President, in the chair.

The records of the last annual meeting, and of the several special meetings held during the year, were read. The Treasurer presented the following Statement of Receipts and Expenditures, which was accepted.

Boston, May 27, 1834.

To the Executive Committee of the American Unitarian Association.

Gentlemen — I herewith submit my account as Treasurer of the American Unitarian Association, with a statement of the Receipts and Expenditures for the

year ending this day. The balance of money on hand, exclusive of the fund for the General Agency, is $1,737 87.

Since the last annual meeting of the Association, a person has been employed to collect the sums subscribed for the General Agency. The unusual scarcity of money and the great depression in business, since the collector has been employed, has prevented the collections from being made as expeditiously as they would have been under more favorable circumstances; but they have been as great as could reasonably be expected. Of $5477 subscribed in this City as donations, the sum of $1457 has been collected; of $2132,50, subscribed in this City for the year 1833, the sum of $1499 has been collected; of $1449,19, subscribed elsewhere as donations or as subscriptions for the year 1833, the sum of $1099,19 has been collected, making the whole amount collected $7055,19; from which has been paid to agents and for sundry incidental expenses $184,19, leaving a balance on hand of $6871,05 to the credit of the fund for the support of the General Agency of the American Unitarian Association.

I am respectfully yours, &c.

HENRY RICE.

Statement of Receipts and Expenditures of the American Unitarian Association, from May 29, 1833, to May 28, 1834.

RECEIPTS.

Balance in the Treasury, May 29, 1833, - -		1099,90
From Annual Subscribers, - - -	36,00	
" Auxiliary Societies, - - -	1342,55	
" Donation, - - - - - -	5,00	
" Sales of Tracts, - - - -	610,46	
" Several Unitarian Societies, for the support of the Domestic Mission to the poor of the City of Boston,	761,50*	
Interest allowed by the Treasurer, -	54,17	
		2809,68
		$3909,58

EXPENDITURES.

Donation to First Unitarian Society in Farmington, Me. - - - - - -	25,00	
Paid for the support of preaching in Fryeburg, Me. - - - - - -	50,00	
Carried over		75,00

* This amount was thus obtained:

From the Ladies of	Federal Street Church, . .		$192
" "	New South, " . . .		158
" "	Brattle Street, " . .		100
" "	Purchase Street, " . .		80 50
" "	West, " . .		71
" "	12th Congregational, . .		60
From King's Chapel Society, ...			100
			761 50

Brought over,		75,00
Paid Rev. Mr. Peirce, of Trenton, N. J. for Missionary services, - - -	50,00	
" Rev. E. L. Bascom, for preaching at Savannah, Geo. - - - -	25,00	
" Rev. John Pierpont, for missionary services in the Western States,	100,00	
" Rev. Dr. Worcester, for a tract, -	15,00	
" Binding and printing tracts, - -	715,78	
" Charles Bowen, one year's salary as General Agent, - - - -	300,00	
" loss on tracts sold, - - -	63,55	
" Incidental expenses, per account rendered, - - - - - -	25,38	
" Rev. Dr. Tuckerman, one year's salary as Domestic Missionary, - -	400,00	
" Rev. C. F. Barnard, one year's salary as Domestic Missionary, - -	400,00	
		2169,71
Balance,*		1739,87

HENRY RICE, *Treasurer.*

Boston, May 27, 1834.

BOSTON, MAY 27, 1831. The subscribers have examined the accounts of the Treasurer of the American Unitarian Association, hereto annexed, compared the same with the vouchers, and find them correct, the balance on hand this day being seventeen hundred and thirtynine dollars, eightyseven cents.

THOMAS TARBELL, } *Auditors.*
JOHN S. WILLIAMS, }

* The payment by the Treasurer of a bill for paper of $680, presented since the date of his Report, has reduced the balance above to $1059 87.

The Association proceeded to the choice of Officers for the ensuing year. Mr Walker and Mr Young having declined a re-election, thanks were voted them for their past services. The amendment of the Constitution, proposed at the preceding Annual Meeting, was adopted.

At half past seven o'clock, the Association proceeded to the Federal-street Church. Prayers were offered by Rev. Prof. Palfrey, of Cambridge. The Report of the Executive Committee was read by the General Secretary.

NINTH ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

The Executive Committee of the American Unitarian Association, in presenting their Ninth Annual Report, desire to state distinctly the course which they have been pursuing, and to notice, briefly, some circumstances in the present state of society, which seem favorable to the progress of truth and holiness.

The attention of the Committee has been directed to several distinct objects, all tending, more or less directly, to promote the great purposes for which we are associated. The tract department, during the past year, as during former years, has been a prominent object of attention. The management of this department is attended with many and serious difficulties, the perplexing nature of which can be fully known only to those who have been called to this arduous duty, but which, when distinctly presented to the mind and duly considered, will, it is presumed by the Committee, secure for the

result of their labors a candid and favorable judgment. These difficulties arise principally from the great variety of tastes to be suited and of wants to be met. There are many in the community, who, from a slight acquaintance with our views of divine truth, have become deeply interested in them; but they are interested, not as believers, but simply as inquirers. They wish to know more of the peculiar character of our views, of the grounds on which they rest, and of their probable tendency. To these points their inquiries are almost wholly directed. Consequently, if a plain, pungent, practical tract — a tract, for example, upon the danger of delay, be put into their hands, it is not adapted to their peculiar state of mind, it does not meet their wants. They will say, 'this is indeed good, but it does not differ from the exhortations of other classes of Christians. For all denominations insist upon the danger of delay. What we wish,' they add, 'is to be made acquainted with the distinctive peculiarities of your system, and the arguments by which it is supported.' This large, and, in many parts of our land, rapidly increasing class, will read, with interest, only such tracts as give a clear statement and a powerful defence of our views, a full explanation of our principles, and a development of what may seem to be the natural tendencies of our system.

Then there are many in the community of a different class. They have passed the stage of anxiety in regard to opinions, the period of doctrinal inquiry. They have heartily embraced our views, and have become settled in their principles. They now seek for instruction of an entirely different kind. They wish for such tracts as will bring home to their hearts, in full power, the

great truths of the Gospel; such as will give them clear views of the spiritual nature of our religion, and of its adaptation to their own spiritual wants; such as will light up in their hearts the flame of pure devotion, and guide and strengthen them in the cultivation of vital piety and personal holiness; such as will aid them in resisting the power of the worldly influences by which they are surrounded, and point out to them the most judicious modes of benevolent action. It is to these points that their attention is now principally directed. Consequently, if a tract, containing a statement of our doctrines and arguments in their defence, is put into their hands, it is not adapted to their peculiar state of mind, it does not meet their wants. They throw it aside in dissatisfaction, and seek for something practical or devotional. In respect to these two classes, it will be perceived, that the tracts, which alone are read with interest by the one, are the very tracts which will be regarded by the other as not suited to the wants of the community.

And so it is in regard to many particulars. There are the ignorant to be enlightened, the careless to be awakened, the inquiring to be guided, the desponding to be cheered, and the doubting to be confirmed. There are some, who relish nothing but what is plain and scriptural and practical. There are others, in whom pride of literary taste and intellectual power may, perhaps, have gained an ascendency, whose attention is to be secured only by what is beautiful or profound. — Each of these classes has its peculiar wants, and will be most interested and profited by religious instruction, in a form adapted to meet these wants. But it is too often the case, that each class regards its own taste as

a standard of universal application, and considers that religious instruction which is not suited to this taste, is not adapted to the wants of the community. Here, then, in the vast variety of tastes to be consulted, and of wants to be supplied, is one fruitful source of difficulty.

In addition to this, the circumstance that a pledge is given to the community for the regular periodical appearance of publications, where those, who give the pledge, must depend on others for the power to redeem it, is a source of much difficulty. It will often happen that suitable materials are not seasonably presented, and, consequently, the community must be disappointed as to the regular appearance of their tracts; or such must be issued as can be obtained, and not such as would, under the most favorable circumstances, have been selected.

Such are some of the difficulties, which attend the management of the tract department. Allusion has been made to them, in order to explain the course which has been pursued. The Committee have been desirous of discharging the important trusts committed to them, to the best of their ability. And, as the extensive and constantly increasing circulation of the tracts of the Association in former years, seemed to stamp the seal of public approbation upon the course which had been pursued, the Committee have not thought it best to make any essential alterations in their plan. It has been their endeavor to press on in the course which seemed to be open before them, to send forth as great a variety, to suit as many tastes, and to meet as many wants as they might be able. And if we look back upon the whole series of tracts issued by the Association, it will be perceived that there has been a

greater variety than might at first thought have been supposed. The whole number issued is eightytwo. Of these twentyseven are doctrinal, eight are explanatory either of circumstances important to the full understanding of the scriptures or of particular passages, fifteen are practical, thirtytwo are miscellaneous. This classification presents, it must be acknowledged, a great variety of subjects — a variety appropriate to the various wants of the community. It is believed, that there is also an appropriate variety in the style in which the tracts are written — a variety suited to the various tastes of the community.

During the past year the Committee have issued ten new tracts, and the two others necessary to complete the number for the year, will be immediately put to press.* Of these, 50,000 copies have been printed. They have also, as there was a call for it by the public, reprinted 2000 copies of No. 32, making the whole number of copies printed during the year, 52,000. 47,247 copies have been circulated. The circulation of the tracts might, doubtless, be increased, for it is at present subject to some restrictions. We cannot expect persons to purchase our tracts, unless they are interested in our views. But in some parts of our land there are many persons who, through dissatisfaction with the religious instruction around them, have become indifferent to the whole subject. Such persons will not purchase our tracts, but they are willing to receive and read them. In this way, they might, perhaps, be saved from indifference, and worldly-mindedness, and moral ruin. The Com-

* Since the annual meeting these tracts have been printed, and make Nos. 82 and 83 of the first series.

mittee are fully aware, that, in this vicinity, surrounded as we are by a multiplicity of publications upon the subject of religion, we cannot feel the need of tracts, we cannot estimate properly their real value. It is only from individuals who have gone out into the more distant parts of our land, where the friends of our faith are scattered among those who differ from and oppose them, and who have seen the eagerness with which tracts are seized and read and circulated, that we can learn their importance. It is known that, in former years, the religious opinions of almost whole neighborhoods have been changed by the silent and unobserved power of the tract, co-operating with the Bible. It is hoped that the tracts of the past year, in connection with those of former years, are silently working their way. Nay more, it is believed that they have gone abroad, like the small seed borne upon the wind, to be dropped, in some cases at least, in places where the soil is prepared for the reception of them, and where, nourished by divine influences, they will, in due time, spring up and bring forth fruit a hundred fold. Still, as the wants of the community in this respect are various and constantly changing, and can be learned only by mingling freely with the community, the Committee would express the hope that the friends of our faith, who are scattered abroad throughout our land, and who enjoy opportunities of becoming acquainted with the different wants of the community, will in future aid them in their labors, by communicating such information as they may be able to give in regard to the wants of the public, and the adaptation of the tracts which may be issued; and especially that they would aid by preparing and presenting to the Committee such tracts as may be best suited to their

respective regions. It may be proper, however, to remark, that the Committee have had it in contemplation to make a change in this department, but have reserved this subject for further deliberation.

A second object of attention with the Committee has been the Ministry to the Poor. Indeed, this ministry, from its very commencement, has been with them a favorite object, not so much on account of its particular benefit to individuals within the narrow sphere in which it operates, as on account of its tendencies to general good. The Committee have regarded themselves as acting not for the local interests of a particular city, but for the best interests of truth and piety throughout the community. And they have looked upon this ministry not merely as serving to relieve the temporal wants and to promote the spiritual improvement of a few degraded individuals, in a particular city, but as affording an example in which a peculiar feature of our religion is carried out into action, and exhibited in such a manner as to arrest attention and excite interest. The gospel is declared to be glad tidings to the poor. Yet, notwithstanding this peculiar feature of our religion, it is the fact, that there are multitudes of poor in our land, who have not the gospel preached to them. By their poverty, in connection with their feelings and with the fashions of society, they are shut out from our houses of worship; they belong to no religious society; they are under the particular care of no Christian minister; they seem to be abandoned by the better portion of the community to influences too powerful for them to withstand, and by which they are consequently borne down to the lowest depths of degradation. The establishment of this ministry was an attempt to carry the benefits of the gospel to this class of

our fellow-men. Had it resulted in nothing more than the relief of the temporal wants, and the promotion of the spiritual improvement of some few individuals of this class, it would have been well worthy of attention. But this is thought by the Committee to be but a very small part of the good effected by this ministry. The Reports of the ministers at large, stating the evils, pointing out the causes, and suggesting the remedies of pauperism, have aroused many of the most powerful minds in our land to reflection upon the subject; they have excited to action, in attempts to rescue the vicious and to make the gospel what it was intended to be, many in other denominations and in other cities. In the city of Boston there are now nine missionaries to the poor, ministers at large, connected with other denominations than our own, and all actively engaged in carrying forward the benevolent design of the gospel. In the city of New York, where a minister at large is supported mostly by the members of the First Unitarian Society, success, as we learn from Mr Arnold's report, attends this good work.

But there is another view in which this subject has presented itself to the minds of the Committee. As we look abroad over our land, we find that the evils, so great in cities, prevail to some extent in towns and villages. In most, if not in all our towns and villages, there are individuals and families sunk in the depths of poverty and the degradation of vice. They are connected with no religious society, the subjects of the official care of no particular clergyman, and the objects of Christian solicitude with but very few of the professed followers of Jesus. It is desirable that every minister of the gospel should not only strive to be able in expounding the word, and faithful

in preaching from house to house, within the limited circle of those who may unite in contributing to his support, but should regard himself as a minister of that gospel, one of whose peculiarities is, that it is glad tidings to the poor; and should feel himself bound to exemplify by his deep interest in the poor and degraded, especially around him, this peculiarity of our religion. It is desirable, too, that every professed follower of Jesus should take a deep interest in this portion of our brethren, and, as far as circumstances may permit, should himself become an actual visiter of the poor. The Committee have thought, therefore, that they should be promoting the interests of truth and piety throughout the community, by spreading abroad, in their series of tracts, the reports of the ministers at large. It is true, that the details of these reports are local in their character, and to those who look only at the details, these may have been uninteresting numbers of the series. But it is equally true that the principles illustrated by these reports are of vast importance and of universal application. And it is still further true, that the force and beauty of any abstract moral or religious principle, are best learned from the details of the manner in which that principle is acted out. It is in this way, that the full force and peculiar beauty of the principles of our holy religion are learned from the local details of the manner in which those principles were acted out by our Saviour, as contained in the reports of his apostles. The Committee have thought, therefore, that to those who look at principles, these numbers will be as interesting as any in the whole series.

Some changes have taken place in the Ministry to the poor during the past year. The Rev. Dr Tuckerman

has been compelled to leave, for a time, the duties so dear to his heart, and in which he has labored with so much success, and is now abroad for the benefit of his health. Mr Charles F. Barnard, from the Theological School at Cambridge, and Mr Frederic T. Gray, of this city, formerly assistants to Dr Tuckerman, have, in his absence, succeeded to his duties. These young men have entered into this cause with their whole hearts, and are devoting to it all their energies. The details of their peculiar plans and of their various labors, either have been laid before the public in their report which has already been printed, or will be in those which may hereafter be issued.

It is now in contemplation to adopt measures, by which the Executive Committee will be relieved from the care of this ministry. The interest excited in a great degree by the reports of the ministers at large, in the moral and religious wants of the poor of the city, has led to a consultation among the friends of benevolent action, as to the best means of relieving these wants. This consultation has resulted in a plan to effect a union of the various churches of our faith in the city, for philanthropic objects, and it is expected that the plan will be carried into operation in the course of the coming season. The Executive Committee will then be free to devote a less divided attention to plans and measures for the spread of pure Christianity, and for the promotion of vital holiness.

A third object of interest and attention with the Committee, has been the General Agency of the Association. It will be remembered, that, at our last Annual Meeting, Rev. Charles C. Sewall, of Danvers, was elected to this office. After mature deliberation upon the subject and for reasons which were regarded as satisfac-

tory, Mr Sewall felt compelled to decline the acceptance of the appointment. The Committee were then called upon to make arrangements for another election. A special meeting of the Association was called, on the evening of the 7th of October. Upon proceeding to the choice, Rev. Bernard Whitman, of Waltham, was unanimously elected. The Secretary communicated to Mr Whitman the result of the meeting, and received in answer, a communication from him, stating his willingness to accept the office to which he had been elected, if the consent of his people could be obtained, but that, on account of the peculiar nature of his connexion with them, he should be unwilling to leave them without their free and full consent. A Sub-Committee was therefore appointed to confer with his society. This Committee urged upon their consideration, the importance of the office of General Agent, and the difficulty of finding men adapted to its peculiar duties. But the result of their application was unsuccessful. Mr Whitman was compelled, through the refusal of his people to consent to his removal, to decline the acceptance of the appointment.

The Committee were therefore again called upon to consult as to a suitable candidate, and to make arrangements for another choice. A special meeting of the Association was called on February 3d. Upon proceeding to the election, it was found that Rev. Jason Whitman, of Saco, Maine, was chosen, who, having received a dismission from his people, signified to the Committee his acceptance of the office of General Agent or Secretary. Early in April, he repaired to this city, and has since been endeavoring to make himself acquainted with the duties of his office, and the wants of the community. He has attend

ed the Annual Meetings of the Providence Auxiliary Association, the Middlesex County Association, and the Danvers Auxiliary Association. He has also addressed the Watertown Auxiliary Association, and has communicated with clergymen in different parts of our land, in order to ascertain, if possible, the feelings and wishes of the friends of our faith, and the peculiar wants of different parts of the community. He will, therefore, be ready, soon after the annual meeting, to enter more fully upon the duties of his office — to visit the different feeble societies in our land in order to inquire into their wants, to point out to them the sources of strength within themselves, and to give such encouragement and counsel as the respective circumstances of different places may seem to require. He will be prepared to go forth and visit the regular and well organized societies of our faith, when desired so to do, in order to excite in brethren of the same faith greater sympathy with each other, and to greater zeal and activity in the cause of truth and goodness. The questions are often asked, what plans have been formed, and what principles laid down, for the regulation of the duties of the General Secretary? In answer to these questions the Committee would observe, that none but a general plan could be formed, none but general principles could be fixed, while viewing the subject in the abstract. The particular application of these general plans and principles must be such as may be suggested by an acquaintance with the wants of the community, and may vary as these wants become more and more known. It should be remembered, too, that much of the success, as well as much of the comfort and happiness of the General Secretary, will depend upon the

kind counsel, the hearty welcome, the deep sympathy, the fervent prayers, and the cordial coöperation of the friends of our faith throughout the land.

These three subjects, the management of the Tract department, the oversight of the Ministry to the Poor, and the establishment of the General Agency, have been the prominent objects of attention with the Committee during the past year. Having given this statement of their labors, they would now call attention to some circumstances in the present state of society, which seem to be favorable to the progress of truth and holiness.

From the correspondence entered into by the General Secretary, much information has been gained in regard to the views and feelings of our friends, and the state of religion in our churches. From this correspondence a few extracts will be given. A correspondent from Essex County writes: 'I think there has been, of late, an increasing interest in the subject of religion, particularly on the part of the young men. A course of lectures, delivered at their request, on the Evidences of Christianity, has done much to excite and keep alive this interest, and has been followed by the happiest results. There is a spirit of good will and a disposition to coöperate in every good work, growing up in our young men.' A correspondent from Barnstable County writes: 'The state of religion is evidently improving. People feel a deeper interest in its institutions.' A correspondent from Worcester County writes: 'During the last seven years, ten new societies have been formed within the county. Nine of these have settled ministers, and are enjoying constantly the institutions of religion. And in most of these places, I can truly say I have observed a marked

improvement of character. Grey-headed men have been added to the church; careless men have been reformed, and multitudes of children are in a course of successful instruction, which promises the happiest results. Practical and devotional books are in great demand among us. A correspondent from New Hampshire writes: 'The attention paid to religious institutions and charities, and the deep interest in christian truth in my own parish, is truly encouraging. I find all services, whether of a public or private character, punctually and fully attended, and all means of instruction eagerly embraced.' A correspondent from Connecticut writes: 'In my view, the most encouraging feature in the present aspect of religion, is the growing interest that is so apparent among several of the denominations in moral reform. The temperance and other similar movements are all highly encouraging. I find that, everywhere, they unite the hearts and the hands of those who engage in them without regard to the difference of their creeds.'

Such is the information derived from the correspondence of the General Secretary. The conclusions drawn from this information are confirmed by the free and full conversations, which he has held with many of our friends in his different excursions. And the information gathered, both from correspondence and from conversation, that, in the different churches of our faith, there is an increasing interest in vital religion, a growing attachment to the institutions, a greater regard for the precepts, and a more full manifestation of the spirit of the Gospel, is regarded by the Committee as a circumstance truly encouraging, far more encouraging than any accounts which might be given of the formation of new societies.

For societies may be formed, professing to hold our views of divine truth, while they have none of the spirit which our system requires, the spirit of the Gospel. And consequently we may have the appearance of making rapid progress as a denomination, when there is no sound and healthy religious growth. And we may be disappointed in our expectations by hastily taking courage from this kind of increase. But if we have evidence that those who have embraced our views are becoming more attached to the institutions of religion, and more earnestly engaged in personal religious improvement, less worldly-minded, and more devout, holy and benevolent, we may take courage, we may rejoice, for if even the borders of our denomination should not be extended, the increasing power of truth and holiness would be most truly manifested.

The growing interest among our friends in the great moral and benevolent movements of the day, is regarded by the Committee as another circumstance favorable to the progress of truth and holiness. These movements, or perhaps we should more properly say, the spirit manifested in these movements, seems to indicate the prevalence, in the community, of more correct notions than have heretofore prevailed, in regard to the real nature and the true design of the gospel. It would seem from these that men have learned, that the true way of living to the glory of God is to live for the good of mankind, not merely for their temporal and physical good, but for their moral, spiritual, everlasting good. These movements seem to indicate, too, that men have at length caught something of the spirit of Jesus, who ' came to seek and to save that which was lost.' In times past the treatment

of the vicious and degraded, was such as might arise from viewing the Gospel as a system of defence merely, and not as a system for the rescue of mankind. Those who had fallen victims of vicious indulgence, were too often regarded as in an entirely hopeless condition, and were abandoned to their fate. The exertions put forth, had for their object the defence simply of those still uncontaminated. This indeed 'ought men to have done,' to have guarded carefully those still free from vicious pollution. But they have at length become convinced that they 'ought not to have left the other undone,' and acting under this conviction, they are now going forth to the deliverance of the vicious and the degraded; they are going forth, too, in the true spirit of the Gospel, which looks upon mankind not as divided into tribes, and nations, and sects and parties, but as all children of one common Father, and brethren of one common family. Many of our friends, for awhile, stood aloof from these movements, not because they were not interested in the objects, but because they doubted the expediency of the measures adopted, and feared the tendency and final result of the almost fanatical zeal of many of the leading friends and advocates of these objects. But they have at length felt it to be their duty to step forward, that so they might exert an influence in restraining extravagant and misguided zeal, and might gain from the warmth of others, some addition to their own fervor, and might be the means of preserving a proper balance, and carrying forward steadily and surely these great and glorious designs. An incidental, but somewhat important, advantage, resulting from this increasing interest in the great benevolent movements of the day, is, that it brings men

of different parties and sects, of different creeds and speculations, who had looked with coldness and suspicion upon each other, to act in concert. As they are thus brought together, they learn that they are all moved by the same love for man, and the same regard for the will and the glory of God; that they are all possessed of the same kind feelings, influenced by the same worthy motives, and governed by the same pure principles. They come to look upon each other with kindlier feelings, and to forget their sectarian differences in their zeal for the great interests of our common religion. It is with gratitude then, that the Committee have observed this growing interest in the benevolent movements of the day. It is with heartfelt joy, that they have noticed it as a circumstance peculiarly favorable to the progress of truth, and of piety.

Still another circumstance which the Committee have regarded as peculiarly favorable to the progress of pure and undefiled religion, is, the increasing interest in good and worthy objects among the young men of our land. It is on the young that the great interests of knowledge, and virtue, and piety, mainly and ultimately depend. Let the middle-aged and the old do what they may, still, if the young do not sympathise and do not coöperate with them, and especially, if the young, by their devotion to the world, to pleasure, and to sinful indulgence, thwart their plans, their exertions will be almost in vain, as to any permanent good results. And, on the contrary, if the young are truly alive to their own best interest, and the best interests of the community, and are actively engaged in the promotion of sound knowledge, enlightened virtue, and fervent piety, the cause of our common reli-

gion must ultimately prevail, how indifferent soever may be their elders. It is then on the young that the great interests which we all have at heart mainly and ultimately depend. And consequently it is to be regarded as a circumstance favorable to the progress of truth and of holiness, that so many of the young men of our land are becoming sensible of the vast responsibilities that are upon them, and are taking an active part in the duties that are before them.

In conclusion, the Committee would say that, as far as their acquaintance with the condition of the churches, or of the land, justifies them in speaking, they entertain the belief that within the last year, just views of religion have spread themselves through wider masses, and gone deeper into the institutions of society than before. Improvement is not only the watch-word, but the active influence of the times. All sects are busy, and while all are growing because the country grows, all feel more or less sensibly the power of those principles which we have been anxious to place upon their true ground of paramount authority to all opinions or speculations of human device. During the last year, as for years previous, and as must be for many years to come, a warfare, unjust alike to opinion and to character, has been waged against us. But so long as we shall be faithful to our principles, — liberty, holiness, love, — we need not fear the issue. Injustice never can overthrow truth, when upheld by piety. If we might trust to outward signs of prosperity, we perceive no reason for discouragement. Houses of worship have been built, ministers settled, and societies gathered. Our distant churches have been confirmed both in the faith and the righteousness of the gospel ;

the cause upon the advancement of which we are associated has been silent and gradual but sure in its progress; and even while we lament in regard to ourselves that we have done no more, we have great reason for gratitude to God, on account of our condition and prospects. Of the prevalence and progress of our opinions in other countries, the Committee have received little intelligence since the last meeting. On the continent of Europe, in Asia, and at the Cape of Good Hope, there are, as we know, individuals and societies earnest in the maintenance, and zealous for the diffusion of the faith which was taught by the one Mediator between God and man. The ministers of Geneva have contributed by their writings to the instruction of the world. In England political and hereditary circumstances are so interwoven with religious professions, that a system of belief, which rejects with equal frankness the errors of private opinion, and the abuses of a public establishment, will find few open disciples. But abundant evidence has been given, that this system is secretly undermining the authority of prescription, and preparing the way for better things. The most important event in immediate connexion with the spread of our opinions which has occurred within the last year, is the death of the Rajah Rammohun Roy — a man of whose powers of mind, of whose devotion to truth, and of whose fervent philanthropy, we rejoice that the record has been placed upon the pages of the world's history. One of the few truly great men, whose names must live so long as merit can be appreciated, his death has disappointed the hopes of many hearts in distant quarters of the globe. But God's truth does not fall with the men who undertake its defence.

The cause in which we are associated, we verily be-

lieve, is the cause of truth, and of God. Nothing then is wanting to its final success, but the faithful, and rightly directed, and persevering efforts of its friends. Let the ministers of our faith be fervent, and zealous, and devoted, speaking the truth distinctly and fearlessly, but in love; let those who are preparing for the holy office of the ministry, imbibe the true spirit of the gospel; let them add to thorough theological attainments, an acquaintance with the wants of the community, and a spirit of self-sacrifice and unreserved devotion to their master; let the professors of our faith feel the vast importance of individual influence, and of private effort; and finally, let the zeal and the exertions of all be crowned with an increasing interest in personal religion, in moral progress, in spiritual perfection, and our cause will, with the divine blessing, prosper. Let every individual exert himself, to the extent of his ability and influence, to give to our private efforts, to our public institutions, to our theological disputes, and to our religious anniversaries, the character not of party bitterness and sectarian zeal, but of christian liberty, and of gospel love — let every individual set before others the irresistible evidence of a devout and holy life, and our cause will, with the blessing of God, finally succeed.

After the reading of the Report, the Chair invited the remarks of such gentlemen present as might be disposed to address the meeting.

Rev. Alonzo Hill, of Worcester, moved the acceptance of the Report. He wished, he said, to bear his

testimony to the interest that was felt throughout the country in the prosperity, influence and usefulness of the Association. He had evidence that it had been instrumental in raising up and sustaining many religious societies; that it had been instrumental in the spread of truth, and in the promotion of piety.

Among the subjects touched upon in the Report, there was one which he desired particularly to notice. He rejoiced that while the poor of the city had been made special objects of attention, by the Association, the poor of the country had not been forgotten. In the present disturbed and divided state of the community, many societies are poor. Formerly the state of things was different. Our fathers, at the first, when they cleared away the forests for agriculture, cleared away places also for their churches, and were constant in their attendance on the services of the sanctuary. Now it is otherwise. The good order of the religious community is disturbed, societies are divided, and many churches are almost deserted. The snow banks block up the doors in the winter, and the long grass grows undisturbed before them in the summer. Our fathers not only supported worship for themselves, but sent religious instruction to the strangers around them, to the natives of the forest. And shall not we do something for the destitute among our own people — those who are bone of our bone, those who agree with us in sentiment, and sympathize with us in feeling? It is a cause for congratulation that this subject has been called up by the Committee in their Report; that there is a disposition to do something, to do more than has yet been done, for the assistance of these destitute and feeble societies.

But the question will arise, What can be done? In answer, Mr H. said, he would refer to what had already been done by the Evangelical Missionary Society. The operations of this Society have not, indeed, been extensive. But yet, in past years, it has rendered valuable aid to many feeble societies; it has revived the drooping spirits and cheered the desponding hearts of many in our land. It has sent the bread of life to multitudes of hungering souls, and has done much to aid in sustaining the institutions of religion. It deserves to be fostered and sustained by the community. It is to be hoped that this Association may be enabled to go hand in hand with the Evangelical Missionary Society, in strengthening the things which remain.

There is another subject of importance, said Mr H., upon which he would offer a few words. We send out our tracts. This is well. They are doing much good. But we want something more, we want the voice of the living preacher. We want young men of zeal and energy, who will enter with their whole heart and soul into the duties of the profession, and who will address their fellow men with earnestness and power as immortal beings. An impression has gone abroad that liberal preachers are not wanted. It is not so. The wants of the community are far beyond the supply. We are not to judge of the wants of the community by the number of societies that are already organized, and prepared for the settlement and support of a regular ministry. How can we expect societies of our faith to spring up, of themselves, in the midst of opposing views, without having heard our doctrines distinctly set forth? It would be unreasonable. But many, very many in the community

are dissatisfied with the prevailing religious instruction. They are prepared to listen; and it is of the utmost importance that our views be presented to them now, before they become decidedly sceptical, or settle down into absolute indifference. We want then young men of zeal and energy, who will go out into the highways and by-places, proclaiming the glad tidings of the gospel, in their simplicity and purity, with earnestness and power. And let not the difficulty of the task discourage our young men. A brilliant genius and commanding talents are not absolutely necessary. There are qualifications of more importance than genius and talents, and which are within the reach of all. We want men who have imbibed the spirit of their Master; who have something of his devotion to the service of God and the good of man; something of his spirit of self-sacrifice. Let young men of this character go out into the community, and they will find multitudes of attentive hearers; they will soon gather around them those who love the gospel in its simplicity, who value the institutions of religion, and who are willing to make sacrifices for their support.

And, as a means of raising up laborers for this important work, Mr. H. said he would suggest to parents the importance of endeavoring to turn the minds of their children to this subject. Let them, while training up their children in the truths and principles of the gospel, endeavor to impress upon their minds a deep sense of the importance of laboring to spread these truths and principles throughout the community. Let them teach their children to look upon the christian ministry as one of the most important means of promoting the good of

man and the glory of God. In this way they may be instrumental of increasing the number of pious and efficient ministers; in this way they may be instrumental of advancing the cause of christian truth and holiness.

Rev. Mr Brownson, of Canton, did not rise to make a speech. He rose because he would avail himself of every opportunity to bear his testimony in favor of the cause supported by this Association, and especially because he would declare his sympathy with the spirit manifested by the Report to which he had listened. He valued liberal Christianity. He thought its cause that of patriotism, morality, and of humanity. He rejoiced in its success.

I approve, said Mr B., the spirit manifested by the Report, because it is not sectarian; and when I say *not sectarian*, I would be understood. I am not one of those who would advocate timidity and indecision. I will speak my honest convictions, comport they with the convictions of my fellow-beings or not; and I would have every one speak boldly, honestly, what he believes, without inquiring with whom he may agree or disagree. I would not, Mr President, have a man conceal his sentiments, nor forbear to support them; but I would have him support them simply as the truth, not as being opposed to the views of others. I dislike polemics. Sects are not as far apart as they imagine. The party most opposed to us, agrees much more nearly with us than we commonly believe. All are aiming at the same thing, have nearly the same spirit. Forms may be different, words and phrases may be diverse, but at bottom there is little difference. Let sects come toge-

ther more frequently, and they will find they have but slight causes for separation. I am one who believes all sects have some truth, and that no one has the whole truth.

Reference has been made to feeble societies. I know, sir, there are many such. I know there is a lamentable indifference manifested towards religious institutions—in some places a contempt for them, and in others a determined opposition to them. But what shall be done? We cannot force those feeble societies to support religious institutions. Why was it that our fathers supported religious institutions? Why did they make such great sacrifices for them? It was because they loved them, because they felt the need of them, and because the ones they established responded to the deep wants of their souls.

Those institutions are not now loved. They do not now answer to the new wants which the progress of mind and the changes of events have produced. Men are not indifferent to them because they are opposed to religion, nor because they are indifferent to religion; but because they feel no need of them; because they do not find that they respond to their wants. They, indeed, want religion, but they want it clothed in some form that will attract their attention, and entwine around it all the strongest, sweetest and holiest of their affections.

This leads me to observe that if we would build up feeble societies, induce men to support religious institutions, we are not to reason with them; we are not to undertake to show them that it is for their interest to support them. Men do not want logic; they do not want arguments; but they want religion should come to them in a

manner, in a form, that at once wins their love, and is responded to from the very bottom of the soul. For this we should labor. We should seek for such religious institutions as the wants of the age, the spirit of the times, demand.

We must also speak to men in the tone of confidence, with authority, with that tone of authority which a heart-felt conviction of the truth of what we utter always gives. We must present men our views as a religion. Hitherto, Unitarianism has been presented to the community as opposed to the prevailing theological notions. The time has come when it should be presented simply as Christianity, as religious truth, as something positive and authoritative in itself, and depending on itself, on its own intrinsic merits alone. Let this be done. Let its truths be told in words that are instinct with life, in tones that will touch the heart and stir up the soul from its very bottom, and the evils of which we complain will no longer exist. Men demand religion, they crave it; let it only come to them in a manner that will meet the deep wants of the soul, and feeble societies will be built up; men will no longer be indifferent to religious institutions, but will be prepared to make any sacrifice their support may demand.

Rev. Mr Gage, of Nashua, N. H. said:

Mr President, — I would trespass but a few moments upon your patience, and that of this audience, while I allude to one or two of the dangers and duties of Unitarian Christians. There are, sir, in our societies in the country, those who are not, as yet, fully imbued with the pure spirit of Unitarianism Men who have joined us

merely upon the ground that we are the advocates of free inquiry and religious toleration. They do not approve of the highly denunciatory preaching which they occasionally hear; and with little knowledge of Unitarianism, with little actual acquaintance with its spirit and power, they join our ranks for the reason I have named. They contend for an important principle; and so far as they are conscientiously devoted to the vindication of the rights of conscience, they should be cordially welcomed as fellow laborers with ourselves in the vineyard of our common Lord. Now, sir, it is highly important that we keep their condition in view in our public ministrations; that we do not endeavor to accommodate our views to theirs, in all points; that we aim to present Christianity to their minds in its true character, as a religion of high spiritual and practical power. There is danger, sir, lest, to conciliate a few, we lower the tone of our public ministrations, insist less urgently than we ought upon the pure and elevated morality of the gospel, and thus the impressive moral power of our views be very much impaired. If this be done, it will prove one of the most effectual obstacles to the progress of pure and undefiled religion which the truth ever yet encountered. And such a course would, moreover, be exceedingly unjust to our cause. Pure Unitarianism breathes a high and devoted spirit. It urges the claims of God's holy word in tones of earnestness and power. It is, if I may so speak, the very fountain head whence the waters of salvation are pouring themselves forth in all their divine purity, in all their cleansing and refreshing influence. Pure Unitarianism casts a dark frown upon sin, in whatever form it may appear — aims to purify the very sources of human

action — to send forth the affections of the heart, after having been sanctified by its power, as so many messengers of mercy and of love, to do good to the whole human family. Unitarianism is not, sir, as its opponents often declare, an easy and low system of faith, which flatters men with the hope of impunity while they continue in sin — which would permit conscience to slumber on the very borders of the grave. Oh, no, sir. And Unitarians are bound — by their love for the Lord Jesus Christ, by their love for the souls of their fellow men, by their regard for the highest interests of the world — they are bound to urge, with deep seriousness and fervor, the solemn teachings of Revelation. It is thus, and thus only, that those who have joined our ranks from the cause which I have named, can be awakened to a full perception of the spiritual excellences and beauties, the high moral influences of our views. It is thus that they may be filled with new spiritual life, nerved with new spiritual strength. It is thus that they may be girded in the whole armor of God — the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit — and thus be enabled to stand firmly on any part of allotted duty, to enter boldly any field of religious effort, and, in every conflict with sin, to come off conquerers and more than conquerers.

I rejoice, sir, that the attention of the Association has been directed to the little bands of Unitarian Christians scattered here and there in our country towns. These little bands are the fruits of that growing spirit of mental freedom, which has already produced important results, and which, guided by discretion, and sanctified, as I believe it often is, by the spirit of God, is destined to gain

new and noble triumphs over ignorance and error. Now, sir, situated as these Christians are, liable to a thousand influences calculated to depress and scatter them, they need encouragement. If they are encouraged, if urged to do all in their power for the cause of pure religion, if they see the hand of sympathy stretched out to aid them, if they hear the voice of encouragement rising to cheer them, they will be filled with new strength, they will cling devotedly to their cause. But if left to struggle alone, if they see their more fortunate brethren taking no interest in their welfare, they will sink into despondency, the ties which bound the little band together will be removed, and they will be scattered. To induce them to persevere, they must see their fellow christians interested in their prosperity, they must be induced to catch and breathe something of that earnest and devoted spirit which filled the breasts of apostles, martyrs and reformers. And when the nucleus has been formed, and the little band has become instinct with pure spiritual life, they will be successful; for God will always bless those who are faithful to his cause, he will always bless those who are faithful to themselves.

I am highly delighted with the Report, and forcibly affected by its urgent recommendation of pure spiritual exertion. We are, sir, called upon to labor, and, if need be, to suffer, in one of the noblest causes in which men were ever called upon to act. We would detach the truth, which is powerful to enlighten, to sanctify and to save the soul, from all mixture with human error, and proclaim it in the ears of our fellow beings, in all its purity and power. We would awaken men from spiritual apathy, from the servitude of sin, and urge them to

aspire to the liberty of the sons of God. We would, if the expression be allowed me, dispel the clouds which have been, for ages, gathering over the face of the sun of righteousness, and cause its glory to be wholly unobscured. We would make religion not a matter of mere outward ornament or show, but of living principle, of permanent interest; awakening the powers of the understanding into vigorous action, giving new life and freshness to the affections of the heart, and throwing a moral lustre over the whole path of life. To accomplish an object so desirable, every Unitarian Christian should consider himself bound to devote his best energies and efforts to this holy end. The circumstances of the times demand, as with a trumpet, all energy and fervor on the part of the friends of Jesus Christ and practical righteousness; and we owe it to our Maker, we owe it to his sacred truth, we owe it to our fellow Christians and ourselves, to give ourselves, with a fervent devotedness of spirit, and purpose, and of life, to the will and the glory of God. We have powerful motives to exertion. The cause of devoted piety, of christian morality, of religious toleration, and of gospel charity, is urgently pleading with us. That our past efforts have not been wholly in vain, is evident from the change already wrought upon the prevalent system of theology, its gradual approaches toward Unitarianism. And to carry the pure and cheering spirit of our views to the hearts of our fellow men, should be with us an object of inspiring interest. Our views, sir, harmonize with the character of God, as recorded in his word and in his works. They produce, in an eminent degree, those precious fruits of holiness on which God, and Christ, and angels and good men delight to gaze. Their strength to

support the soul in life's last trying hour, when the eyes are about to bid farewell to all things visible and earthly, when the body is about to crumble and mingle with its kindred dust, and the spirit is about to return to the God who gave it, its power to support the soul in that solemn season has been triumphantly tested on many a bed of death. And I trust, sir, that multitudes of happy beings are now looking down upon us, from their bright abodes of bliss on high, whose souls, while on earth, were sanctified and made ripe for heaven by the spirit and power of Unitarian Christianity. God grant that its course be onward and upward, that it pass, like a spirit of light and life, from heart to heart. While we live, may we all be devoted to its advancement, may our lives abound in its precious fruits. And when we die, may we be sustained by its cheering and blessed faith, and receive, hereafter, as rewards of our fidelity and exertion, crowns of everlasting righteousness in a better and brighter world.

Rev. Mr Sullivan, of Keene, N. H. after some introductory remarks, alluded to the condition of many of the religious societies of New England. They are split and divided, and become feeble and presently extinct. How shall these evils be remedied? It must be done by showing that the moral well-being of the people is the object of our efforts, and not a sectarian influence. It has been sometimes charged upon us that we preach a negative system. It is not so; and let us, by the earnestness, directness and pungency of our appeals, give increasing evidence that it is not so.

Mr S. alluded to the decided and spirited efforts of Unitarians in defence of religious freedom. This is cer-

tainly not a sectarian work ; it embraces and aims at the truest interests and happiness of all. Thus enlarged and philanthropic in their views and spirit are all the operations of the Association, and they ought to commend it to the best affections of all the lovers of mankind.

Dr. FOLLEN, of Cambridge, said he had much satisfaction in the character of the Committee's Report. He rejoiced in the evidence that liberal views were spreading. He rejoiced that while we entertain different views of christian truth from many around us, yet that ours is not a negative system, — that our principles are spiritual and life-giving.

In considering the course pursued by the Committee in conducting the affairs of the Association, he regarded with great satisfaction the attention given to the ministry for the poor. It was a noble charity, and gave evidence that the Association conducted its affairs in a truly christian spirit. When the disciples of John came to Jesus to ask him whether he was indeed 'he that should come,' he enumerated to them the great evidences of the authenticity of his gospel. All these evidences, in the course of time, have ceased to accompany the preaching of Christianity; all, I say, save one — that *the gospel is preached to the poor.* This characteristic of genuine orthodoxy, the Association have made their own, in spirit and in deed.

The gospel was indeed preached to the poor in former times; but it was not preached as it is now. Then, the purpose of the preaching was to make men peaceable in their poverty, and submissive and contented under their ignorance, dependence and sufferings. It is not so now.

It is now preached with a view to elevate them, and as a means to do it, — physically, and in an outward and worldly respect, as well as inwardly and spiritually. The aim and tendency of the preaching to the poor now is, to cause them to respect themselves, and to feel that they have power to provide for their own support and defence, and to redeem themselves from the bondage and suffering of poverty, and from ignorance and moral degradation. The manner in which this ministry has been conducted is indeed worthy of all praise. A general sympathy with the privations, wants and peculiar temptations of the poor has been awakened. The rich — that is, all those who exercise the divine privilege of giving — have been led to rejoice in the good done to the poor. Both the rich and the poor have been benefited by this ministry. The brother of low degree has learned to 'rejoice in that he is exalted,' in the means afforded him to rise to honest independence in this life, as well as to advance his standing in the moral world, and supply the wants of his spiritual and immortal nature. The rich has been taught to rejoice 'in that he is made low;' he has learned to look down upon the eminence on which wealth and rank have placed him, as low and worthless in comparison with that moral elevation which is equally within the reach of every child of God. The rich have learned to regard the poor as fellow Christians, and to act towards them as brethren. In this judicious and truly christian beneficence of the Association, they have raised to the honor of Christianity and of the simple and sanctifying principles of their own faith, a noble temple, which shall stand, in all its glory, long after these material temples, in which we worship now, shall have decayed and perished.

Mr Swett, of Boston, said, it was far from his intention when he entered the house, to obtrude any remarks upon the meeting. And he had but a few words to say, though he had brought them from a great distance,—a few words from the South. He had shared with all present the satisfaction with which the able Report had been heard, especially where it mentioned the good effected in New England. But much had been done out of New England. Mr S. observed it had been his lot to pass the last winter in the Southern cities, Charleston, Augusta, and Savannah. When, but a few years since, Unitarianism went forth to this Southern country, a younger brother knocking at their door, asking *only Christian charity*, it was denied! 'Have we not all one Father?' Not in their view, for they were unwilling to admit us on this 'common ground.' So great, Sir, was the opposition to Liberal Christianity that the clergyman of our persuasion in Charleston, was, for many years, not mentioned among the regular clergy of that city, nor was his church called upon to co-operate in their charities. Such was the estimation in which our views were held at the South, but a few years since.

As to the field for usefulness. Under such disadvantages, contending with such prejudices, one would fear but little could have been effected. On the contrary, much has been effected; much we trust for the welfare of man, and the glory of God. And this from the very nature of our doctrines. Though Unitarianism will do much, — everything to reclaim from sin and amend the sinner, to win souls to God by bringing man to duty, yet has it never been wont to 'move heaven and earth to make proselytes.' It did not go to the Southern country, Mr

Chairman, to build up its churches, by pulling down those already established; nor that it might, stealing into their camp, seduce their goodly company from its allegiance. It did not covet, Sir, even the stranger, which was within their gates. It only called aloud to the stragglers, those who were on the outskirts of the camp, those who were *without* the gate. Such was the class which Liberal Christianity would win to her altar. This class is very numerous. The slightest knowledge of our Southern cities, a mere glimpse at them will show how much our doctrines have been needed. There is in each of these cities a large floating population; those who come from the middle interior states with cattle, produce and merchandize. These men are free, alike in their habits and opinions. As for doctrines, they profess none. Many say they have met with no religious system they can adopt; and they regret it, for they feel the want of something they have not. They now seldom enter the House of God, for when they do, too much is exacted from them. They are called upon to believe what shocks their understandings. The unhappy consequence is, that by this numerous, and by no means lowest class, a Sabbath in the Carolinas is spent very differently from the same day in New England.

Again there is another class, comprising men of education and discernment, who have been called hard names because they do not believe enough. That is — *enough for others!* The burthen of most the preaching which these hear is, on the one hand *credulity*, on the other, *condemnation!* Neither alternative was pleasing, and the subject was treated as of old by the 'most noble Felix' — indefinitely postponed. One of this class informed

me that for years previous to his knowledge of liberal opinions, he had not been in the habit of attending Church; but had spent his Sabbaths in the woods with his gun and pointers. But he has now learned better things. That knowledge which has confirmed his faith, *without calling upon him to resign his reason*, has influenced his practice. This is by no means a solitary instance, but is taken from a mass of similar facts, only as an illustration. These two classes, Mr Chairman, are very numerous. They are ill at ease with their *want of doctrine*, and their unsettled opinions; and like the Athenians are ever wishing to hear some new thing. These are the men whom our belief must win to the Church. To these our call has been, 'Come and see!' They *have* come, and they *have* seen. The scales have fallen from their eyes, and they have seen us revering the Son of man who lived, suffered, and died, that we might believe, that our faith might become conviction. They have seen us honoring the Son of God, (*whom they had been told we denied*) believing in his resurrection, and hoping humbly to share his triumph. Many have heard *us* who formerly would hearken to none. They have seen with their eyes, and heard with their ears, and have been converted. Such is the field.

We have seen what Unitarianism *was* at the South. It was not welcomed. Far from it, it was met with scorn, reproach and bitterness. But scorn, reproach and bitterness were not among its weapons of defence. The chief of these has been the soft answer which turneth away wrath. A few years since the South was no Antioch to us, for we were not *there* called Christians. But Truth is mighty, and kindness as mighty. It has been the trial

of the North and South winds upon the traveller. The influence of this kindness has been such, that those of the South have been induced to afford us a corner of the mantle of Christian Charity. Forbearance and liberality have caused many to ask — 'are these "the pestilent fellows" who, we were informed, had come here to turn our world upside down.' The answer, though tacitly given, has been, 'such is *not* their character; nor such the features of the doctrines they profess.' A short time since we were hardly *admitted*. Now we do not ask admittance, for we are not on sufferance. Sunday Schools, Lyceums, and charitable Associations, now find none more strenuous in action, charitable in heart, and liberal of hand than the Unitarians. Now, instead of fearing that 'the Star from the East' will set in night, we trust that many are finding peace and healing in its beams.

This state of things, Mr Chairman, may well give this Association joy; for it is owing, under God, to its Tracts and to its Teachers. Our brethren at the South, are truly grateful for these. New tracts are much less common there, than here. Their press is by no means so prolific. They are not deluged with new pamphlets and magazines. On this account, they are more esteemed by the many there, than by the many here. Very much too of our progress is to be attributed to the character, personal and professional, of the clergymen in Charleston and Augusta. It would, Mr Chairman, be more pleasing to me, than grateful to them, to enlarge upon this point. Truth, to be sure, will in the end prevail. But how much hastened in its advance by meekness, kindness, holiness of living, and christian forbearance! May I not say that these gentlemen are eminently quali-

fied to advance the cause of Christ, in the region which is blessed by their labors, and to honor the name of the Master whom we serve.

Mr S. hoped his obtruding his remarks upon the meeting would be pardoned. But our brethren of the South look up to Unitarians of the North, as to brethren. Not envying us our birthright, but claiming and receiving with gratitude their share of our noble heritage. They are bound to us by a chord which is electric. Our joys are theirs; they sympathise in our sorrows. We should then be wanting alike in justice to them and ourselves, did we not reciprocate their good will, and bid them God-speed.

Rev. Joseph Allen, of Northborough, offered some remarks on the character of the tracts issued by the association; and while he fully admitted their excellence and adaptation to the wants of a portion of the community, he expressed his deep conviction of the importance of furnishing others of a different character — such as should more fully meet the demands of man's spiritual nature, and such especially as should be better adapted to the wants of the ignorant and the poor. There has been a demand, he admitted, for doctrinal tracts, and it was right that that demand should be promptly met, as it had been. But there was a demand too for tracts of a more serious, practical, devotional character, and such as should be intelligible to the uneducated and less privileged portion of the community. We should preach the gospel to the poor, and we should do this, not only by the living voice, but by means of the silent monitors which we may convey to them in the shape of tracts.

These, he insisted, should be practical rather than doctrinal. There is, he remarked, this striking difference between doctrinal and practical divinity, that when we have once become grounded and settled in the leading articles of our faith, we grow weary and impatient in going over the same ground again and again; whereas the appetite for the latter, for practical divinity, is never cloyed. Simple, earnest, affectionate appeals to the conscience and the heart, are always welcome — are always read or listened to with interest. They never grow stale by age, nor tedious from repetition. They may contain nothing very original or striking, but they will always have the attractions of novelty. Who is ever weary of reading H. More's beautiful little tract, The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain? What reader ever lays down without reluctance, and a desire and a purpose to take up again such works as the Lives of Howard, and Oberlin, and Felix Neff? And as it respects controversial writings, whatever interest they may excite for a time, and however great the good they may accomplish, how soon are they laid aside and forgotten, and how much evil do they often occasion! The good they do is not unmixed good. To how much bitterness, and wrath, and reviling, may they give birth! As has been quaintly remarked, *a viper may come forth out of the heat*, engendered by religious controversy. Yes, and the sting of that viper may not always prove as harmless as in the case of the shipwrecked mariner, on the coast of Melita, who, as we read, shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.

He earnestly hoped, therefore, that this society would promptly furnish tracts of the kind he had adverted to, such as contained simple, direct, affectionate appeals to

the heart. Let us do thus, and we shall promote not only the interests of the Association, but the great cause of practical religion.

Prof. WARE, Jr. of Cambridge said, that he had been pleased with the tone of the Report, and with the tone of the meeting. It would almost seem as if the speakers had been struck, as he had been, with that sentence in which the object of the association was described as being the promotion of 'liberty, holiness, and love,' and had adopted it as the motto to their remarks. Indeed, it appeared to him that nothing could be more suitable than these three words, for a motto to the Association itself. At present it bears upon its seal the words, Αληθεια εν Χριστω ; — THE TRUTH IN CHRIST ; and what is that Truth, or perhaps he should say, the results of it, but Liberty, Holiness, and Love ? since, to promote these among men, it was established, and their promotion is its triumph ; — the end of the Gospel, the end of this Association.

It is sometimes alleged, that we are too doctrinal. Perhaps we are too *controversial ;* but too *doctrinal* we cannot be. For what are doctrines but principles and truths ? and on what but principles and truths, does religion rest, from what else derive its power ? What are the facts, promises, threatenings, motives of Christianity, by which it operates to sanctify and save men, but so many doctrines ? How are Liberty, Holiness, and Love to prevail except through the energetic operation of the TRUTH ? *Sanctify them through thy truth,* said the Saviour ; — and what is that truth but religious doctrines ? Not the denial of what is false, but the assertion of what is true. Not those half dozen doctrines, about which men have

always been disputing, but those many, various and clear religious verities, about which there has been no consultation. I well remember, said Mr W., on reading the 'Velvet Cushion' at its first appearance many years ago, being struck with the remark respecting Arminians and Calvinists, 'that there are *five points* in which they differ, and *five hundred* in which they agree.' This is true of all disputing sects. They quarrel about one thing, and agree about an hundred; — which hundred, if they were but aware of it, are those which operate on the heart, purify the affections, sanctify the life, and save the soul. We certainly are not to remedy the evils of theological disputation by ceasing to teach and press religious doctrines; but by urging the more strenuously those in which the vital power of religion resides. If we omit to do this, and, for fear of being called too doctrinal, only teach the moral precepts of the gospel, we shall greatly fail of duty and success; for how can these precepts be urged except on principle and through motives? and what are these principles and motives but doctrines? You cannot press an important sentiment on the heart, or take a step toward the formation of a character, without the aid of some truth, that is, some doctrine. After some further illustration of this point, Mr W. insisted that it is the design of this Association, by the promulgation of Truth, to help accomplish the great design of the gospel, and bring about the reign of Liberty, Holiness and Love: — Liberty, by which souls and consciences are made free to think and judge for themselves, responsible only to God; — Holiness, which is the perfection of man, and without which none can see the Lord; — and Love, which prompts to all deeds of phi-

lanthropy, and turns earth into heaven. He then alluded particularly to the benevolent action which had been set forward by the Committee of this body. They had originated and maintained the ministry to the poor, whose importance was so highly appreciated; and he asked leave to offer public thanks to those who had so generously contributed to this object, and to those who had now relieved the committee of the charge of that ministry, and placed it under the superintendence of a new Society. He alluded in this connexion to the labors of Dr Tuckerman, and his present absence in Europe, for the benefit of his health; where he had the happiness of meeting with that remarkable man whose death had been spoken of in the Report — Rammohun Roy; one of the great and good men whose memory shall be held in everlasting remembrance. After a life of beneficence and faith, he has gone to his reward. His body reposes in a beautiful spot, very similar to our own Mount Auburn; where his tomb will be a place of pilgrimage to many believing and pious souls.

Rev. Mr Whitman, of Billerica, rose, he said, not to make a speech, but simply to respond to the sentiments of that part of the Report which alludes to the activity of the young men in all that is noble and praiseworthy. He hailed this as an omen of good. He would express to the young his hearty approbation of the course they were pursuing. While it is on them that the important interests of society mainly depend, as suggested in the Report, so it is more peculiarly a matter of importance to them that these interests should be sustained. The old and the middle-aged will soon pass from earthly

scenes and earthly labors. Should irreligion prevail, they will soon escape from its evils. Not so with the young. A long life may be before them. It is then a question of importance to them, whether that life shall be spent in the enjoyment of the institutions of the gospel, or in the midst of vice and irreligion. While then we rejoice in the activity of our young men, let us cheer them in their onward course, by our cordial approbation and heartfelt sympathy.

After Mr W. had closed his remarks, the vote was taken in regard to the Report, which was unanimously accepted — and the meeting was closed by singing the usual doxology.

OFFICERS

OF THE

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

1835 — 36.

PRESIDENT.

Rev. Aaron Bancroft, D. D., of Worcester, Mass.

VICE PRESIDENTS.

Hon. Joseph Story, Mass.
" Joseph Lyman, "
" William Sullivan, "
" Charles H. Atherton, N. H.
" Stephen Longfellow, Me.
Henry Wheaton, Esq. N. Y.
James Taylor, Esq. Penn.
Henry Payson, Esq. Md.
Hon. William Cranch. D. C.
Martin L. Hurlburt, Esq. Penn.
Hon. Samuel S. Wilde, Mass.
" Samuel Hoar. Jr. "
Timothy Flint, Esq. N. Y.
Hon. Lemuel H. Arnold, R. I.

DIRECTORS.

Rev. Henry Ware. Jr.
" Ezra S. Gannett.
" George Ripley.

Rev. Jason Whitman, *General Secretary.*
" Samuel Barrett, *Assistant Secretary.*
Henry Rice, Esq. *Treasurer.*

CONSTITUTION

OF THE

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

1. The name of this Association shall be The American Unitarian Association.

2. The objects of this Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity throughout our country.

3. Unitarian Christians throughout the United States shall be invited to unite and co-operate with this Association.

4. An annual subscription of one dollar shall constitute a person a member so long as such subscription shall be paid, and a subscription of $30 shall constitute a person a member for life.

5. The officers shall be a President, fifteen Vice Presidents, a General Secretary, who shall have the care of all the business and interests of the Association under the control of the Executive Committee, an Assistant Secretary who, in case of the absence or sickness of the General Secretary, shall perform such duties of a Recording and Corresponding Secretary as may require immediate attention, a Treasurer, and three Directors.

6. The Directors, Secretaries, and Treasurer, shall constitute the Executive Committee, who shall meet once in each month, and shall have the direction of the funds and operations of the Association.

7. An annual meeting shall be held at such time and place as the Executive Committee shall deem advisable, of which due notice shall be given, and at which officers shall be cho-

sen, reports be made, and any other business be transacted, which may come before the Association.

8. The Executive Committee shall have power to fill any vacancies which may occur among the officers between any two annual meetings.

9. Any amendments of this constitution shall be proposed at one annual meeting, and may be accepted at the next anniversary, if two thirds of the members present be in favor of such amendments.

Vote passed by the Executive Committee, September 23, 1826, as amended March 18, 1830.

'*Resolved*, That every member of the Association be entitled to one copy of every tract *of the first and second series* published by the Association *during the year for which his subscription is entered.*'

Vote of the Executive Committee, passed January 4, 1826.

'*Voted*, That no society be recognised as auxiliary to this Association, the terms of subscription to which are less than those required in the Constitution of this Association.'

Vote passed by the Executive Committee, June 20, 1833.

'*Voted*, That the 4th Article of the Constitution be so construed, that any one who shall pay $30 for the General Agency of the American Unitarian Association, either at once, or by annual instalments within five years, shall be considered a life member.

CLERGYMEN MEMBERS FOR LIFE.

The following Clergymen have been made members for life of the American Unitarian Association, by the donation of thirty dollars or more, principally from ladies of their respective societies.

Abbot, Abiel.
Alden, Seth.
Bancroft, Aaron, D. D.
Barrett, Samuel.
Bartlett, John.
Bascom, Ezekiel L.
Bigelow, Andrew.
Brazer, John.
Briggs, Charles.
Brooks, Charles.
Channing, Wm. E., D. D.
Colman, Henry.
Dewey, Orville.
Edes, Henry, D. D.
Farley, Frederic A.
Field, Joseph.
Flint, Jacob.
Flint, James, D. D.
Fox, Thomas B.
Furness, Wm. H.
Gannett, Ezra S.
Gannett, Thomas B.
Greenwood, F. W. P.
Hall, Edward B.
Hamilton, Luther.
Howe, Moses.
Ingersoll, George G.
Kendall, James, D. D.
Lamson, Alvan.
Lincoln, Calvin.
*Little, Robert.
Loring, Bailey.
Lothrop, Samuel K.
Motte, Melish I.
Nichols, Ichabod, D. D.
Palfrey, John G. Prof.
*Parker, Nathan, D. D.
Parkman, Francis.
Pierpont, John.
Richardson, Joseph.
Ripley, Ezra, D. D.
Ripley, George.
Ripley, Samuel.
Robinson, Charles.
Sewall, Charles C.
Storer, John P. B.
Stetson, Caleb.
Sullivan, Thomas R.
Thayer, Christopher T.
Thompson, James W.
Walker, James.
Ware, Henry, Jr. Prof.
Ware, William.
Wells, George W.
Whitman, Bernard.
Whitman, Nathaniel.
Young, Alexander.

* Dead.

OTHER MEMBERS FOR LIFE.

Abbott, Samuel.
Adams, Abel.
Adams, Benjamin T.
Adams, James, Jr.
Adams, Philip.
Alger, Cyrus.
Alger, Francis.
Ames, David W.
Andrews, Ebenezer T.
Aspinwall, Samuel.
Atherton, Charles H.
Ball, S. S.
Barrett, Nathaniel A.
Baker, Henry F.
Bird, John H.
Blanchard, Hezekiah.
Bliss, George.
Bliss, Mrs B. D.
Bradlee, Joseph P
Bracket, Samuel E.
Brewster, Miss A.
Brooks, Peter C.
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